HOW LONG IS TOO LONG

HLiTL

Project Reference Number: 2019-1-FR01-KA203-062506

Institutional Recommendations

KA2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
KA203 - Strategic Partnerships for higher education

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

KA203 - Strategic Partnerships for higher education

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European University Foundation

with input from project partners

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Abbreviations

EC - European Commission

EEA - European Education Area

EHEA - European Higher Education Area

EUA - European Universities Alliance

HEI - Higher Education Institution

HLiTL - How Long Is Too Long

IROs - International Relation Officers

ISM - International Student Mobility

1. The How Long is Too Long project

The Internationalization of Higher Education is directly influenced by the globalisation of societies and economies and the increased importance of knowledge-transfer (De Wit, et. al., 2015). The world has never been as globalised as it is today and this situation urges universities to become proactive agents of change and to adapt their processes and strategies to become more international, open-source and flexible in their delivery and share of knowledge. Since 1987, the Erasmus programme has become the largest programme contributing to the internationalization of higher education. This flagship initiative has profoundly shaped how student mobility and inter-institutional cooperation is understood in Europe.

Traditionally, internationalization of Higher Education can be conceived into two main sub-categories[1]: "Internationalization Abroad" (IA) and "Internationalization at Home" (IaH); the former includes outward student mobility on the level of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Erdei & Kaplar-Kodacsy, 2020), while the latter refers to a complementary approach which aims at integrating intercultural, international and global dimensions which affect administrative and teaching staff, students, teaching, learning practices and institutional processes (Leask, 2004 as cited by Erdei & Kaplar-Kodacsy, 2020).

The "How Long is Too Long" (HLiTL) project sets out to enable HEIs to adapt and improve their mobility strategies by mapping mobility schemes with the greatest impact on students' key competences. To achieve this ambitious goal, the consortium partners have developed several studies with the purpose of looking at the development of student competences in relation to different types and lengths of mobilities from a theoretical and practical perspective. In brief, the studies conducted by the consortium encompass:

- **Literature review on International Student Mobility (ISM)**: whose purpose was to provide a first-hand overview of different mobility types and lengths with a focus on students' competence development.
- **Analysis of the existing types of mobilities and its technical conditions:** as a first step, the objective was to analyse the conditions of implementation of different

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[1]There are new approaches appearing that support depicting the complexity of the international attempts of higher education in general, such as the "Internationalisation at a Distance" (IaD) (Mittelmeier et. al., 2020), which goes beyond the traditional IaH approach and activities, by introducing such initiatives that help to connect students through online means without physical movements of the beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, due to the emerging nature of these new approaches, time will inform practitioners on whether these approaches and definitions will become canonical.

mobility schemes, by understanding what already exists at an institutional level, using the HLiTL universities as research samples.

In a second stage, the consortium carried out the design and implementation of an online course among three consortium universities (USQV, UMarburg and UPorto). The results of this experiment will be shared in the form of a handbook of good practices and all the pedagogical material will be made available[2].

● **Student and HEI staff questionnaires:** the aim was to identify the impact of various mobility schemes on students and staff by analyzing the experiences and expectations of those target groups.

The purpose of this report is to provide HEIs with institutional recommendations which can be incorporated into their own institutional strategies and practices in student mobility. These institutional recommendations are based on the data and findings collected in the previous studies conducted by the project consortium.

This report is formed by a brief policy overview and policy context, the institutional recommendations and a comprehensive glossary of terms which can support international relation officers (IROs) and university leaders navigate basic tenets of international student mobility and cooperation, at a time when technical terminology finds itself in an unprecedented state of flux. Furthermore, two brief case studies are included at the end of the document to provide HEIs with concrete experiences, provided by two consortium universities, regarding academic staff training in international environments.

2. European policy and student mobility: an overview

In the past few years, student mobility has become one of the most prominent areas of policy discussion at European, national and institutional level in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Higher education stakeholders have been striving to make mobility available for all students regardless of economic, personal or educational deterrents. To fully understand the mechanisms behind student mobility, it is necessary to look at the main programmes that support these types of activities.

At a European level, the European Education Area (EEA) (not to be confused with the European *Higher* Education Area mentioned above) aims to harness the full potential of

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[2] Once available, the handbook of good practices and pedagogical resources will be available on the project's website.

education by promoting initiatives which will have a direct impact on all Europeans; one of the vision's elements of this policy encompasses the notion of inclusive student mobility, stating that spending time abroad to study and learn should become the norm (European Commission, 2020a). The European Commission (EC) is currently further developing and implementing the EEA through initiatives such as the European Student Card Initiative and the European Universities Initiative. Both are supporting this vision, but the latter is particularly meaningful to the topic of the HLiTL project.

The European Universities initiative are transnational alliances which aim at responding to the increasing demands of societal challenges by building the "universities of the future" with structural, innovative and sustainable impact (European Commission, 2020b). One of the key features of this initiative is the creation of an *inter-university campus* where mobility practices will be embedded within the curriculum at all levels of study as a standard practice. Moreover, within such European Universities Alliances (EUAs), at least 50% of students must benefit from some type of mobility (European Commission, 2020c). This is undoubtedly a challenging objective which almost triples the 20% graduates target that the EC aimed to achieve under the 2020 Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (Council of the European Union, 2011). However, there is a striking tension between the goals that the EUAs are asked to achieve and the funding levels available for a radical increase of student grants; accordingly, the EUAs are being compelled to consider embedding not just physical and blended mobility in their curriculum but also so-called "virtual mobility" – a problematic term that blurs the concepts of mobility and e-learning.

On the other hand, as stated previously, the Erasmus Programme has historically had a pivotal influence on the present and future of student mobility and the fact that from 2021 onwards it will also support short and/or blended mobilities makes it crucial for institutions to plan their international strategies and activities taking into account the strengths, weaknesses and complementarity of these different types of activities. Affording them an in-depth **comparative understanding** of these new mobility formats is the *raison d'être* of the HLiTL project.

Regrettably, the ability of the project to produce such a clear overview has been curtailed by the fact that very few scientific comparative studies on this issue seem to exist. The rationale for making different kinds of mobility eligible under Key Action 1 of the new Erasmus+ (2021-2027) was to enable mobility pathways to be more flexible, and thus broaden the

number of participating students. However, a recent survey shows that only 4% of a sample of more than a 12,000 students indicated that the duration of a 1-2 semester mobility would in itself be an obstacle to participation[3]. Throughout the last years, numerous studies have shown that insufficient financial support[4] is a much greater obstacle to participation and such issues have not been mitigated by the design of the new programme.

As a result, the new possibilities offered by the new programme cannot be described from the extent to which they impact student competences. Instead, HEIs will have to embark on a journey of discovery as to how, over the coming seven years, these different modalities can best work, and what their cognitive and European added value is.

3. Recommendations for European Higher Education Institutions

The HLiTL project was originally conceived as an attempt to shed light on the different types of mobility and their lengths, with the purpose of understanding if any of those elements influence the development of students' competences.

This ambitious initiative has been affected by several constraints, such as the methodological aspect of the literature reviewed in the project and the lack of comparative research regarding different mobility formats, particularly when comparing virtual exchange and physical mobility. In regard to the former, the majority of the papers reviewed, in particular when investigating the so-called "virtual mobility", is material published in the context of projects instead of peer-reviewed research papers. The lack of peer-reviewed papers can greatly affect the quality and replicability of scientific results. Regarding the latter, comparative research in the context of ISM is deemed critical in order to develop appropriate policies.

The new Erasmus+ programme will bring about an increasingly diverse student mobility landscape. This new context will demand HEIs to rethink their internationalization strategies and mobility portfolio in order to maximize the outcomes derived from internationalization, notably at student level.

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[3] SIEM project report : only 4% of respondents indicated "strongly agree" or "agree" the duration of their mobility to be too long, as a practical barrier to going abroad (p 64).
[4] See ESN Survey (2019); ESU Bologna with Students Eyes Report (2018); Erasmus+ Higher Education Impact Study (2019).

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As a result of the findings of HLiTL project, the following Institutional Recommendations targeted to European HEIs have been identified:

1. There is no such thing as a too long mobility

The fact the new Erasmus+ programme gives students the opportunity to go on both long and short-term mobilities does not imply that they are interchangeable in terms of impact or usefulness. Both the literature reviewed and the surveys carried out in this project point to the fact that one or two semesters abroad have an impact and added-value that is not easily replicated or substituted through shorter exchanges. Accordingly, HEIs are advised to continue to make this kind of exchange the backbone of their international offer towards students.

Similar findings were also identified in the ESN 2016 Survey[5], where it was demonstrated that the length of stay has a direct impact on the improvement of the local language, the self-perception of higher employability and career perspectives of students or an increased knowledge about the host country's culture and their own.

In conclusion, within this project, we had set out to discover "How long is too long", but the short answer seems to be that a mobility is never quite long enough, in particular regarding the impact on students' competence development.

2. Take advantage of the flexibility of the Erasmus+ programme and share your findings with the community

Having a new Erasmus+ programme that allows more plasticity to how international cooperation is structured is a wonderful opportunity, and therefore, we urge institutions to seize it and share their experiences with the higher education community.

Early discussions suggest that short-blended programmes hold a lot of potential to stir innovation and involve faculty and academic staff deeply in international cooperation activities. Perhaps in the future all semester mobilities will encompass a preparatory online module, as well as a reflexive follow-up mobility module after their completion, effectively making the most of the potential, blended formats afford us - or maybe we will rely on short

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[5] https://esn.org/esnsurvey/2016

blended mobilities to explore how creativity and interdisciplinary can be effectively enhanced, not least in study fields whose programmes are heavily regulated.

3. Foster the establishment of a measurement methodology of students' competence development before and after mobility

It has been shown that the mobility type and length chosen, are not the unique elements that influence mobility (learning) outcomes: for instance, the availability of resources at university level or the different skills level of the teaching body have been identified as other factors that could be influential in the development of students' competences.

In order to identify which curricular and non-curricular elements influence the development of students' competences in mobility, we propose to establish a European-wide student competence development monitoring system. More particularly, this systematic tracking system[6] would need to ensure that both curricular and non-curricular elements related to the development of students' competences are monitored before and after mobility for every type of mobility (physical, blended and virtual exchange) at institutional level, as well as being consistent and implemented homogeneously among European HEIs.
This suggested system would provide comparative qualitative and quantitative data on a wide array of competence areas. This data would benefit not only the individual and HEIs, as a way to take the pulse of the institution's student mobility offer and its derived impact on students' competence development, but it could pave the way as a new source of student mobility data.

On a similar note, this tracking system could have the potential to help HEIs to reformulate the categorization by which they offer student mobility opportunities. In general, if the main

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[6]**At the moment of writing this report and to the knowledge of the authors, no existing tool/project deliverable currently addresses the emerging gap of systematically tracking student competences' development related to student mobility at European level.** However, on a similar train of thought, the Erasmus Skills project provides a set of innovative tools to help Erasmus students to enhance and acknowledge the soft skills and competences gained in their mobility experience. The variety of tools produced provide support both to students – before and after their mobility experience on soft skills acquisition and European integration – and to the university teachers and practitioners – on how to back Erasmus students for a more conscious soft skills acquisition and how to include mobility-related soft skills in curricula. One key deliverable of the project consists of a comparative self-assessment questionnaire which enables students to compare their competence development before and after mobility. This tool merely informs students about the learning outcomes of their mobility, however, it *could be used as a first starting point for institutions to measure their student's competences in mobility.* This tool is available on the project's website.

purpose of the mobility is learning or training, currently, the mobility offer is normally categorized based on a combination of length (short-term, semester-term and/or one-year length) and format (physical, blended or virtual). Nonetheless, the collection of comparative students' competence development data could foster the integration of competence development as a unique categorization strand. More primary data on the impact of different mobility formats and lengths on student mobility is fundamental to carry out this initiative but starting to rethink how student mobility is offered and categorized by keeping a student-centered approach in mind can have a substantial impact on the future of student mobility.

4. *Terminology matters. Be rigorous*

The ongoing pandemic made institutions scramble to ensure the continued delivery of lectures to all (international) students which has brought about some undesired entropy regarding the usage of terms like "virtual mobility". However, research shows that there are no grounds to equate "cross border e-learning"[7] to an actual mobility, whereby we recommend HEIs to not mix concepts that are intrinsic to internationalization at home processes with those of cross-border activities. As a result, we encourage the use of "virtual exchange" as a replacement of the pervasive "virtual mobility" term, as the former emphasises the experiential aspect and active interaction between participants, which remain closer to the core of International Student Mobility.

This is particularly critical with regards to the organisation and activities of the European University Alliances, which are officially being asked to inflate their mobility numbers by including students involved in e-learning activities. This sets a dangerous and undesirable precedent, and we call the concerned HEIs to further work, address and correct this very matter together with the European Commission.

5. *Unleash the full potential of European University Alliances*

The European University Alliances are European-wide university clusters, supported by the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes, which aim at revolutionising the quality and competitiveness of European higher education. On account of their strategic positioning in

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[7]Definition of virtual mobility (ECTS Users' Guide ,2015).

the European educational landscape and their experimental, reflective and collaborative nature, we deem that these alliances are ideally positioned to take the lead on enhancing research on how students' competence development is impacted by different mobility types and lengths.

We strongly encourage them to set up pilot testing teams who can implement scientific data collection methods across their institutional partners. The objective of these research teams would be gathering and delivering primary data on different mobility types and lengths in regard to the impact on different types of students' competences, beyond the ones identified within the framework of this project, seeing how current policy developments make it imperative to better understand the nature of student mobility and its impact on students' competence development.

6. *Consider your student body needs when designing international strategies*

HEIs play an influential role in tackling Europe's challenges (European Commission, n.d.). As a result, it is crucial for them to include and reflect the diversity of Europe's population, putting inclusive practices and strategies at the core of their institutions. From an international and learning mobility standpoint and in order to respond to this inclusivity challenge, universities need to acknowledge that demographic, socio-economic or cultural differences (among other factors) have the potential to affect the mobility preferences and/or needs of certain students. For instance, mature or caretaker students might have specific limitations to go on mobility in comparison to other types of students.

This institutional recommendation aims to make mobility as accessible as possible for students while fostering a more individualized approach to each student's personal and professional situation at an institutional level. Nowadays, institutional student mobility procedures are rather mechanized and rigid, preventing students from being offered the possibility of selecting the most appropriate mobility format matching their needs. Hence, narrowing down the scope of inclusivity in student mobility.

7. Provide higher education staff with the necessary skills to take maximum advantage of the new Erasmus+ programme

Different student mobility formats have their own educational design processes, and they require diverse human and technical resources. While many of us have observed first-hand how academic staff has been impacted by the sudden shifts brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, this exceptional circumstance has made clear that adapting to online tools and environments is not always straightforward.

Accordingly, successfully carrying out more online activities with (international) students will require a combination of better pedagogical methodologies, intercultural know-how and technological resources that will enable university staff to improve their technical and teaching skills. To do so, it is crucial that HEIs and the corresponding departments (i.e educational technologies, pedagogical support units, etc) actively support the design, development and implementation of internal training programmes for this type of staff, which incorporate the three key elements stated above.

Academic staff with that type of training can help prevent the decrease of the teaching and learning quality when relying on virtual environments, but also potentially facilitate the successful design, development and implementation of blended mobility and/or virtual exchange programmes.

With the purpose to provide contextualisation to this institutional recommendation, Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary) and the University of Porto (Portugal) have shared their first-hand experience with training programmes for academic staff within their institutions in the format of two brief case studies. This further addition to the document aims to provide other HEIs with practical experience which might help them implement similar programmes and practices in their own institutions (See Annex).

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Glossary of terms

Concept	Definition	Source	Hyperlink
Basic skills	The basic skills are considered to be literacy, mathematics, science and technology; these skills are included in the key competences.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021-2027	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en
Credit mobility	A limited period of study or traineeship abroad set within on-going studies at a home institution - for the purpose of gaining credits. After the mobility phase, students return to their home institution to complete their studies.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021 - 2027	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en
Competence	The proven ability to to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development	European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations (ESCO), n.d.	https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Competence#:~:text=According%20to%20this%22competence%20means,terms%20of%20responsibility%20and%20autonomy.
Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)	A form of virtual exchange of knowledge, **Collaborative**: staff are co-teaching the module on equal footing; students are put in a position of needing to cooperate effectively and efficiently to produce the required outputs of the activity. **Online**: the interaction between the students and staff in question takes place (mostly or exclusively) online.	Centre for Global Engagement	Preferred to 'virtual mobility'. http://onlineinternationallearning.org/about/

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	International: there is meaningful interaction between staff and students in two (or more) different countries, leading to the development of international and intercultural competences. **Learning**: COIL modules are learning activities, and should be an integral part of the curriculum, not an optional and inconsequential 'extra'.		
Comprehensive internationalization	Comprehensive Internationalization is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it is embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility. Comprehensive internationalization not only impacts all of campus life but the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. The global reconfiguration of economies, systems of trade, research, and communication, and the impact of global forces on local life, dramatically expand the need for comprehensive internationalization and the motivations and purposes driving it.	Hudzik (2011)	
Degree mobility	A period of study abroad aimed at the acquisition of a whole degree or certificate in the destination country/ies.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021-2027	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en
Formal learning	A type of learning that takes place in an organized and structured environment	Cedefop, 2008	https://www.cedefop.europa

	(such as in a recognized education or training institution or in a job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective and normally it leads to an official certification.		.eu/files/4117_en.pdf
Internationalization	The integration process of international and intercultural dimensions that are in the function of: teaching, researching and institutional service delivering. It consists of several key concepts. The first, the internationalization of education is not a static concept, but represents the continued investment of effort in some changes. The second group of important concepts is related to the triad consisting of: (a) international; (b) intercultural; and (c) global dimensions. The first dimension refers to the sensitivity of the relations between/among nations, cultures and countries. The second dimension is related to the diversity of cultures that exist within countries, companies and institutions. The third global dimension relates to the ability of global perspectives in a great number of readings.	Vorkapić, 2016	
Internationalisation at Home (IaH)	Internationalisation at Home is aimed at the majority of university students who do not go abroad for study or placements. IaH can provide an international and/or European dimension for this large majority of students. It aims to create a learning environment for non-mobile students to acquire a better understanding of people from different countries and cultures and increase their knowledge of and respect for their way of living.	Nilsson, 1999	

Informal learning	Informal learning results from daily activities related to work, family or leisure which is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021-2027	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en
International learning mobility	Physical mobility, whereby a national boundary is crossed for the purpose of study or training in another country. In the IVET context this refers to both school-based and work-based learning. International mobility includes both mobility between EU Member States and mobility between an EU Member State and a non-EU country.	Cedefop Mobility Scoreboard	https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/mobility-scoreboard/
International student mobility	"Students who cross national bor-ders for the purpose or in the context of their studies"	Kelo, Teichler, & Wächter, 2006, p. 5	
Global citizenship	"Seeing the *self-in-the-world* as one dwelling among others" Global citizenship usually involves three dimensions — awareness (of self and others), responsibility and participation. The enlightened global citizen understands that there doesn't have to be a tension between a nationalistic sense of duty and a moral obligations to the rest of the world.	Killick, 2012	
Key competences	The basic set of knowledge, skills and attitudes which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment, as described in Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021-2027	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en
	1. Multilingual competence 2. Personal, social and learning to learn competence 3. Citizenship competence	Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning	https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/cou

	4. Entrepreneurship competence 5. Cultural awareness and expression competence 6. Digital competence 7. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering 8. Literacy competence		ncil-recommendation-on-key-competences-for-lifelong-learning_en
Learning mobility	Taking part in an activity consisting of a period of moving physically to a country other than the country of residence, possibly combined with a period of virtual participation, in order to undertake study, training or non- formal or informal learning. It may take the form of traineeships, apprenticeships, youth exchanges, teaching or participation in a professional development activity, and may include preparatory activities, such as training in the host language, as well as sending, receiving and follow-up activities.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021-2027	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en
Long-term mobility	In the *context of Directive 2016/801/EU (Recast Researcher's Directive)*, the action of a third-country national , already authorised to stay in one EU Member State for the purposes of research or studies, staying in one or several second EU Member States for **more** than 180 days per EU Member State in order to carry out part of their research in any research organisation.	https://ec.europa.eu/info/index_en	
Mobility	Ability of an individual to move and adapt to a new occupational or educational environment. A mobility can be geographical or 'functional' (a move to a new post in a company or to a new occupation, a move between employment and education); mobility	Cedefop Europass Glossary, 2014	https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4117_en.pdf

	enables individuals to acquire new skills and thus increase their employability.		
MOOC	An abbreviation for "Massive Open Online Course," a type of course that is completely delivered online, is open to be accessed by anyone without cost, entry qualifications or other restrictions and often has large participant numbers. They can have in-person components, e.g. encouraging local participant meetings, and formal assessment, but tend to use peer review, self-assessment and automated grading. There are many variations of MOOCs, e.g. focused on specific sectors, target groups (e.g. vocational focus, teachers, etc.) or teaching methods. MOOCs funded under Erasmus+ have to be open for all and both the participation and a certificate or badge of completion are free of charge for participants. Please note that the open access requirement for educational resources applies also to MOOCs and other complete courses.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021-2027	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en
Non-formal learning	Learning which takes place outside formal educational curriculum. It has a participative and learner-centred approach; it is carried out by learners on a voluntary basis and therefore is closely linked to young people's needs, aspirations and interests. By providing an additional source and new forms of learning, such activities are also important means to improve the attainment in formal education and training as well as to address young NEETs (i.e. young people not in employment, education or training) or young people with fewer opportunities and combat social exclusion.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021-2027	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en

Skill	In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skill can be defined as "the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems". They can be described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and/or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments). Skills and competences are terms frequently used interchangeably; however, they can be distinguished according to their scope. The former typically refers to the use of methods or instruments in a specific setting and in relation to defined and clear tasks. Conversely, the term competence is broader and refers typically to the ability of a person - facing new situations and unforeseen challenges - to use and apply knowledge and skills in an independent and self-directed way.	European Skills /Competences, qualifications and Occupations, 2021 & Europass, 2021	https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Skill#:~:text=ESCO%20applies%20the%20same%20definition,complete%20tasks%20and%20solve%20problems%22. https://europa.eu/europass/en/description-eight-eqf-levels#:~:text=Skills%3A%20In%20the%20context%20of,materials%2C%20tools%20and%20instruments).
Traineeship (work placement)	Spending a period of time in an enterprise or organisation in another country, with a view to acquire specific competences that are required by the labour market, carry out work experience and improve the understanding of the economic and social culture of that country.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021-2027	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en
Virtual course	This category focuses on the virtual course as part of a whole study programme at a HEI or a virtual seminar or seminar series, also in the framework of a HEI. Here, students (or citizens) only engage in Virtual Mobility for a single course or seminar (series) and the rest of their learning activities take place in the	Virtual Mobility: A Best Practice Manual, 2006.	https://www.eurashe.eu/library/modernising-phe/mobility/virtual/WG4%20R%20Virtual%20Mobility%20Best%20

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	traditional way. We do not distinguish between a course or a seminar (series) because there are few differences in either the use and purpose of each.		Practice%20Manual.pdf
Virtual classroom - synchronous	Synchronous virtual classrooms are commonly known as web-conferencing or e-conferencing systems (*Rockinson-Szapkiw & Walker, 2009*). These systems allow real time communications in which multiple users can simultaneously interact with each other via the Internet to conduct meetings and seminars, lead discussions, make presentations and demonstrations, and perform other functions. Virtual classrooms allow students and instructors to communicate synchronously using features such as audio, video, text chat, interactive whiteboard, application sharing, instant polling, emoticons, and breakout rooms.	Use of Synchronous Virtual Classrooms: Why, Who, and How? (Martin & Parker, 2014)	https://webpages.uncc.edu/fmartin3/site2018/publications/JournalArticles/30_JOLT2014_UseSynchronousVirtualClassrooms.pdf
Virtual exchange	Virtual Exchange is defined as technology- enabled, facilitated, people-to-people education programmes sustained over a period of time. Virtual Exchange distinguishes itself from other forms of online learning in several ways: - The focus is primarily on people-to-people interaction and dialogue whereas the primary focus in many e-learning programmes is on content. - The learning goals or outcomes include soft skills that are often not formally recognized, such as the development of intercultural awareness, digital literacies, group work, etc. - It is primarily learner-led: following the philosophy of	E+ Virtual Exchange portal, 2021.	https://europa.eu/youth/erasmusvirtual/about-virtual-exchange_en

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	dialogue where participants are the main recipients and the main drivers of knowledge; learning through dialogue means that participants will be seeking mutual understanding and co-creating knowledge, based on their own experiences. ● Finally, a key tenet of virtual exchange is that intercultural understanding and awareness are not automatic outcomes of contact between different groups/cultures, and virtual exchange programmes explicitly address intercultural understanding and engaging with difference. Virtual Exchanges function in a synergistic and complementary way with physical exchange programmes. They can prepare, deepen, and extend physical exchanges, and, by reaching new populations and larger numbers, fuel new demand for physical exchange.		
Virtual mobility *(In spite of the pervasive presence of the term, it is not recommended to refer to Virtual Mobility).*	A set of activities supported by Information and Communication Technologies, including e-learning, that realise or facilitate international, collaborative experiences in a context of teaching, training or learning.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021-2027	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en
	A set of activities supported by Information and Communication Technologies, including e-learning, that realize or facilitate international, collaborative experiences in a context of teaching, training or learning.	Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2014-2020	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en

	"The collaborative communication between a faculty member and his/her counterpart(s) mediated by a computer. More often, these meetings will be interactive and take place across national borders and across time zones"	Van de Bunt-Kokhuis, S.G.M., 1996	

Annex

Case study – Teacher's support strategy adopted during COVID-19 pandemic

Institution: University of Porto (U.Porto)

General purpose

Report on the support strategy adopted by the Educational Technologies (ET) unit of the University of Porto during COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

Since 2003, U.Porto, through the ET unit, has provided all teachers and students, free access to a Learning Management System (LMS) integrated with several digital solutions, training actions and audiovisual resources to support their pedagogical activities. Since the first COVID-19 lockdown, to better respond to the needs of its academic community, the ET unit has adapted many of its support methods: moved all training to webinar format, increased the number of video tutorials, made available a virtual agenda for scheduling personalized meetings for technical and pedagogical consultancy and intensified contact via Open-Source Ticket Request System (OTRS) to increase its responsiveness.

Key actions

The strategy implemented by the ET unit to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic consequences on the educational model at U.Porto came as a continuity of the diverse communication channels that already existed in the pre-lockdown moment. In a first instance, the main concern was to help those who had never used an online environment, answered with the instant production of a PDF guide that systematized the tools that were available. This information was sent to all teachers on March 12th 2020 along with information on how to access them. Another concern was that remote work and assistance would not become a barrier in support processes.

For that purpose, some actions took place:

> **Ticket Request System (OTRS)** - The contact via the Ticket Request System (OTRS) was intensified and proven to be very valuable for a better understanding of the academic community issues and therefore increase the response efficiency of the

team. From March 12th 2020 to March 31th 2021, a total of 4,561 requests for support were answered.

Analysis of teachers' needs - Based on the needs expressed by teachers through the OTRS, a grid was drawn up to analyse and record requests for support. This allowed the systematic identification of the main difficulties demonstrated by teachers in the use of the tools provided (Moodle, Panopto, Zoom, Turnitin and others) and supported by U.Porto. This also made it easier to define the webinars and tutorials offered.

Video tutorials - Anticipating that with the cancellation of face-to-face classes many teachers who did not use digital tools to support T&L would have several difficulties in the transition to an online model, a set of tutorials covering the main tools offered by the University were produced. There were a total of 65 video tutorials produced to directly respond to the needs identified in the Ticket Request System analysis.

Training actions - A training calendar of webinars was designed each month - the first webinars were scheduled as soon as the ET team started remote work - to respond to the immediate and long-term needs of teachers. The webinars were open to the entire U.Porto teaching community and had no limit of participants nor pre-registration. From March 2020 to March 2021, 107 webinars were delivered resulting in more than 130 hours of training and 3,969 participants.

Virtual agenda for one-to-one meetings using Calendly - Personalized service through scheduling individual meetings has always been a service provided by the ET unit. With the pandemic and the risks associated with face-to-face contact, followed by the beginning of confinement policies, an immediate decision was made so that the four ET unit staff members responsible for the instructional design and technical knowledge on the digital tools available, had an online calendar available for teachers to schedule a virtual meeting. A total of 494 meetings were scheduled from March 12th 2020 to March 31st 2021.

Findings

We can conclude that some periods, the first lockdown when teachers were forced to make the transition from face-to-face classes to online classes, the beginning of the academic year 2020/2021, the 2nd semester of 2020/2021 and all the assessment periods, were the most

critical with teachers requesting more support from the ET unit. Moreover, these were the periods when the team intensified the supporting actions.

Regarding the acquisition of competences to teach in an online environment and use digital tools in distance education context, although some data suggest that teachers are more comfortable using the platform and using the tools more autonomously in the 1st and beginning of the 2nd semester of 2021, more data and further studies are necessary to fully understand if this is the case.

This period of distance learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had positive results in terms of the use of digital tools by teachers and the consequent adaptation of pedagogical methods to the virtual environment. Although indirectly, the support strategy adopted by UPorto responds to the needs identified by the HLiTL project (IO2 A-B Report) by contributing to the acquisition of technological skills of teachers indispensable for virtual teaching scenarios developed within international blended or virtual exchange programs.

Future work

Inclusiveness, accessibility, socio-economic and cultural diversity are nowadays a concern in education systems (Cerna, 2020). With the COVID-19 pandemic those issues were more uncovered, showing that countries and institutions need to review policies in order to promote an equal access to education and ensure that regardless of the teaching model (classical, virtual or blended) quality is not compromised. For that reason, U.Porto believes that the way forward is to foster staff training.

In line with the support strategy previously implemented, U.Porto is now designing a training cycle for teachers at the beginning of their careers. The goal is not to focus merely on technology but to raise awareness about the importance of pedagogical and also intercultural aspects in the academic activity, allowing teachers to better develop transversal skills. Linking pedagogy with technology and adapting pedagogical practices to certain teaching contexts and environments taking into account intercultural competences, is the biggest challenge of this training cycle.

The training is designed with mandatory and optional modules, from which we can highlight the following: introduction to pedagogical practice in Higher Education; academic integrity; interculturality and accessibility in inclusive processes; voice and vocal technique; conflict management strategies; gamification of learning; video in teaching and learning strategies; items analysis in test construction; dialogue and communication.

Not only this initiative aims to be a training, but also a place for teachers to exchange experiences and expectations with their peers.

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Case study – International training for academic staff to improve the quality of teaching mobilities

Institution: Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE)

Background

The training programme was based on the [Teach with Erasmus+ KA2 project's](#) research results on the characteristics of teaching mobility and used the [Quality & Impact Tool for Teaching Mobility Assessment](#) developed in the project as a source. The consortium leader was ELTE, while the project partners were the University of Alcalá, the Réseau des Universités des Capitales de l'Europe (UNICA), the Institut polytechnique UniLaSalle, and the European University Foundation.

The main aim of the programme was to raise the awareness of prospective participants regarding the [research results](#), the [quality tool](#), the [teaching mobility platform](#) and other results of the Teach with Erasmus+ KA2 project, resulting in a better understanding of the opportunities and development possibilities that teaching mobilities offer.

By participating in the training programme, academics could engage in knowledge-sharing and networking with other participants and enhance their understanding of the opportunities that teaching mobility has to offer. The learning outcomes of the training directly strengthened participant views of the possible hindering factors, organisational context, and pedagogical aspects of teaching mobilities, which would allow the realisation of a professionally rewarding teaching mobility experience in the future.

Key actions

The programme was structured along four separate but interconnected modules. It was possible to complete only a selection of modules, but for the certificate, the completion of all modules was necessary.

The modules were planned to be executed in an online format, with the possibilities of additional asynchronous tasks between modules to complete practical tasks that were started during the synchronous period.

Each module covered an important aspect of quality regarding teaching mobility, starting with the general aspects, getting to know the participants and their context (Module 1), followed by designing research-enabled tools to understand motivational and hindering

factors and the importance of the organisational context regarding teaching mobility (Module 2). After that, the programme tackled possible outcomes and results regarding teaching mobilities and how to enhance these possibilities from an individual (professional development) and a pedagogical standpoint (Module 3 and 4).

The modules were planned as 1-day synchronous training sessions (2-2 hours with one break) on different days, however, the length of the separate sessions had to be adapted to the online environment, therefore Module 3 and 4 were slightly shorter than originally planned.

Content of the modules

Module 1 – Quality in teaching mobility

- Introduction to the TWE+ project (research results, quality tool, platform, pedagogical tools).
- Sharing of knowledge, experiences and good practices regarding teaching mobilities.
- Analysing the system/national and institutional context for teaching mobility, special application due to the pandemic.
- Reflection on the quality aspects of teaching mobility.

Module 2 – Designing the quality teaching mobility experience

- Exploring the main hindering and motivational factors regarding teaching mobilities (creating user personas).
- Exploring the relevance of the organizational context and support regarding teaching mobility (customer journey mapping).
- Reflection on the possibilities for making teaching mobility an attractive activity.

Module 3 – Getting the most out of teaching mobilities

- Individual planning: aligning professional development needs with activities and feedback opportunities, exploring the possibilities of teaching mobility in realizing the plan (academic professional development plan).
- Pedagogical planning: planning your course/lecture for a teaching mobility, constructive alignment, intercultural understanding.
- Reflection on the possible outcomes of teaching mobilities.

Module 4 – Pedagogical aspects of teaching mobility

- Innovative pedagogical methods, student-centred learning, cooperative learning.
- Enriching the digital teaching and learning experience.
- Obtaining meaningful feedback from students.
- Reflection on the pedagogical aspects of teaching mobilities.

Findings

The success of the training series was measured by several qualitative and quantitative criteria. In regard to the latter, there have been 187 subscriptions for the 4 modules in total (resulting in approximately 40 participants at each module session), out of which 123 have been awarded with a certificate of attendance. During the groupwork of the sessions, participants created 9 user personas and related to that, designed 9 distinct customer journey maps which simulated diverse experience sharing among participants about their participation in teaching mobilities (Module 2). In parallel, participants designed 7 lesson plans using the ABC learning design method, reflecting on the possibilities to realise those lesson plans in a teaching mobility (Module 3). Between Module 3 and Module 4 participants gathered their specific questions regarding teaching in a teaching mobility. Altogether 25 questions were answered in Module 4. During Module 4, participants - working in groups - gathered more than 50 innovative pedagogical ideas for teaching mobilities. After the training, the facilitators created a Google Sheet which enabled participants to stay in touch after the training, share good practices, and ask for help in different areas related to teaching mobilities. As a result of the training sessions, 5 new teaching offers were shared in the Google document.

The responses of the post-training evaluation surveys have furthermore shown that the modules were greatly inspiring and beneficial for the participants, especially when they focused on practical tips and processes on how to plan and implement teaching mobility (e.g. through the introduction of concrete pedagogical planning tools). The training furthermore helped academics to gain a deeper understanding of what diversity, adaptability and creativity means in practice in international classrooms, having also provided them with the possibility to reflect on their pedagogical practices and develop new skills to be more efficient when it comes to teaching mobility.

Future work

Partially due to the successful implementation of the above training programme and thanks to the University's active participation in cross-university collaboration projects (both smaller and large-scale ones), the Department of Erasmus+ and International Programmes has become strongly committed to paying special attention to the development and support of training programmes that are targeting academic staff within the university, with the aim of enhancing the quality of both students' learning mobility and academic staffs' teaching mobility experiences.