

DELIVERABLE 1.6

INTERVIEW RESULTS

WP1 - CONSULTATION PROCESS

WP Leader: CMET

Target groups: students

Dissemination level: institution

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INTRODUCTION

A series of quality interviews were conducted in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, with representatives of staff members and students who benefited from E+ International Credit Mobility exchanges for staff teaching, staff training, study and research activities. The interviews were the occasion to discuss about personal intercultural experiences, opportunities for individual or group exposure to innovative learning and teaching techniques abroad, chances for strengthening one's academic curriculum.

The local interviews were conducted by teams of 2 representatives for each EU partner institution moving to one partner countries, and interested all the above mentioned target groups for od each involved university.

As far as staff members are concerned, the interviews were conducted following the staff and NEO questionnaires (**deliverables 1.2 and 1.3**). As far as students are concerned, the interviewees were asked to introduce themselves, indicating field and level of study, then, the interviews were conducted following the outline of the students online questionnaires (**deliverable 1.4**).

ALGERIA

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 12th -16th March 2018

HEIs visited: Université des Sciences et Technologie d'Oran, Université de Biskra

Country: Algeria

Team performing the interviews: Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, Italy; Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza Din Iasi, Romania

UNIVERSITE DES SCIENCES ET TECHNOLOGIE D'ORAN

STUDENTS INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 12th March 2018

Number of people interviewed: 5

KEY FINDINGS

A total of 5 students were interviewed. The interviewees benefited from student mobility experiences in the framework of E+ KA107 ICM scheme to either attend classes and sit exams (2 of them) or to conduct thesis research (3 of them), during the academic year 2016/2017. The destinations were: Romania, Spain, Italy and Turkey.

The available mobility opportunities together with the call for application are promoted through the institutional website, the institution's Facebook page and during classes by the teaching staff.

In terms of obstacles and difficulties related to the mobility, the most critical issues that were reported by the interviewed students are:

- The limited amount of time between the publication of the call(s) and the deadline for submission.
- The requirements of translation of certain documents for the application, which constitutes a time-consuming, and sometimes a financial burden for the applicant.
- Bureaucratic issues such as: the visa application process (which might require time and constitute a financial burden) and the health insurance in some Programme Countries (the process for benefiting of the insurance services is not yet clear and a stronger support by the hosting HEI should be provided to that regard).
- Limited available information on academic activities (especially, the available courses and the language of tuition of such courses) at the receiving HEI.

A series of good practices were also identified that contributed to increase the effectiveness of the selection process and/or the quality of the mobility experience itself:

- The sending HEI organised an interview session to test and certify the applicants' English knowledge for those destinations where English language proficiency is a compulsory requirement. By doing so, applicants could benefit from a free-of-charge internal service set up by their home institution, instead of paying fees for a test to be made at private language centres.
- Some beneficiaries could attend a local language course at the receiving HEIs which was useful not only to learn or improve one's knowledge of a foreign language, but also to facilitate integration in the local community.
- Students also reported a planned improvement as far the technical management of the application process is concerned: so far the application documents were received by email, but this will be replaced by an IT platform in order to ease the collection and filing of documents.

STAFF INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 12th March 2018

Number of people interviewed: 4

KEY FINDINGS

A total of 4 staff members were interviewed, all of them are academic staff, but some of them also perform administrative roles. Especially, two of them also work at the central International Office of the university.

The interviewees benefited from staff mobility experiences in the framework of E+ KA107 ICM scheme. Two of them participated in a staff mobility for training and two of them in a staff mobility for teaching during 2016, 2017 and 2018. The destinations were: Romania, Spain and Latvia.

The institution has a strategy targeting international staff mobility that translates into an annual programme of scholarships for *internships* dedicated to both academic and administrative staff. The programme is managed at Faculty level, i.e. each Faculty has its own budget to fund a certain number of staff mobilities. Outgoing staff mobility is encouraged especially to HEIs which already have partnerships with the institution.

As far as E+ KA107 ICM is concerned, this adds to the above mentioned institutional programme by providing opportunities which are generally perceived as useful and important as they provide a further chance for the institution as a whole to open up to the international HE environment. As a matter of fact, the demand for staff mobility opportunities is increasing, but the available funding and number of scholarships remains limited.

The available mobility opportunities together with the call for application are promoted through the institutional website, the Facebook page and through mailing lists which are sent to all the deans, vice deans and chiefs of departments. The most effective way of promotion and circulation of the information remains the word of mouth among pairs and colleagues.

A series of obstacles were identified concerning especially the preparation phase of staff mobility for teaching/training, which can be grouped under two main topics:

- **VISA ISSUES:** Procedures for visa application are time-consuming and might cause the delay in the departure. In some cases, the acceptance letter (which is among the required documents for visa applications) is sometimes needed in original version, which contributes to delays in the visa application because the applicant has to wait for the original document to be sent by the receiving HEI.
- **FINANCIAL ISSUES:** The E+ support for travel costs hardly covers the entire amount of costs that participants have to bear for the mobility. Besides some participants experienced a delay in the reception of the E+ individual support.

Interviewees also provided useful feedback to improve processes and practices currently in place, as well as a series of recommendations to increase the quality of the mobility exchanges, to the benefit of both the individual participants and the institution as a whole:

- Communication and coordination between the sending and receiving institution should be improved. Information should be exchanged and shared in due time and in a more complete and clear way concerning the rules and procedures for the participation in the mobility exchanges and the selection criteria set by the receiving university.
- In order to improve the technical expertise of the academic/administrative staff with roles related to the internationalisation strategy of the institution, a series of mobility exchanges should be dedicated to that.
- A stronger focus should be put on the impact analysis of the implemented mobility exchanges, and its benefits for both the individual beneficiary and the involved institutions.

UNIVERSITÉ DE BISKRA

STUDENTS INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 15th March 2018

Number of people interviewed: 7 students

KEY FINDINGS

Students having participated in Erasmus exchanges were at master and doctoral level in the fields of study Architecture and Agronomy (6 girls and 1 boy). They performed an Erasmus mobility of study and research (for the PhD students) without credit recognition. Some of the students had already performed a short-term exchange mobility abroad (through AIESEC, in Nantes, Belfort, Aix-en-Provence).

Erasmus opportunities were mainly promoted through academics and the website of their home university. Interviewees underlined the need to promote the programme more on social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. and to organize "Study Days" during which the potential beneficiaries could find out more info about the exchange programmes.

As far as the application process is concerned, interviewed students assessed the application procedures and the information they had at their disposal as “good” and “excellent”. Their professors spent one full day to explain them the procedures and the documents they needed to complete (with the help of the International Relations office). They didn’t face any particular issue at this stage. As for the evaluation and selection steps, the students were aware of the evaluation criteria used in the selection without having details about the weight of each criterion in the final average. They thought that the main criterion for selection should be the research topic and its adequacy to the research objective. Since the agreements were concluded for specific study area fields (ex. Architecture), not all the students were eligible. In the Agronomy field, it was the opposite case, there were more scholarships available than candidates. The only issue they witnessed during the mobility was the health insurance (one of the students needed an emergency hospitalization and her health insurance didn’t cover the costs in Italy). During the discussions, it resulted that University of Padua needs to communicate better with the incoming students about the type of the medical insurance they need during their stay. The students didn’t signal other problems during their stay; they didn’t have to change their Learning Agreement which was signed before their departure. They received all the information they required during their stay at the host university (they were offered a buddy service and a city tour that facilitated their rapid integration into the local life). Most of their activities during the mobility were research-based followed by presentations in the Architecture field; the students were very satisfied with their work and of the cooperation with their coordinator. Meanwhile, in the Agronomy field, the students were quite dissatisfied with their activities because they seldom met their scientific supervisors and they didn’t have specific research goals.

The recognition at their home university did not apply in terms of conversion and validation of credits and grades, since the students didn’t take courses, but only conducted research activity. All the students received Certificates of Stay at the end of their mobility. The PhD students had to present a report in front of a scientific commission upon return in their home university.

STAFF INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 14th March 2018

Number of people interviewed: 6 persons (+ 3 persons from the management board of the university)

KEY FINDINGS

A total of 6 staff members were interviewed, all of them are academic staff. 5 of them participated in a mobility for training and 1 in a mobility for teaching. The destinations of their mobility were: Spain and Italy.

Promotion. The participants got to know about Erasmus+ exchange opportunities from their colleagues from the Italian partner university since they had collaborated before in another international project financed by the University of Biskra. The Italian partner introduced the Erasmus programme to its Algerian counterpart. The promotion of available mobilities was performed through the university’s website, phone, posters and direct discussions with the interested persons. The participants underlined the need for the creation of an Erasmus+ office composed both of

administrative and academic staff and not only by academics as it is now. Hiring full-time staff for the International Office would allow a better promotion of the programme and the creation of ad-hoc procedures for the selection, evaluation, and recognition of the mobilities.

Recommendations:

- Info sessions might be organised to present the available mobility opportunities to all relevant staff members in order to raise awareness and visibility around such opportunities.
- It would be useful for the university to develop an internationalisation strategy and to reflect upon E+ ICM as a useful tool to reach the institution's internationalisation targets.

Before the mobility, the staff pointed out as an obstacle to the smooth development of their mobility the lengthy visa procedure to some Programme Country destinations. The Erasmus programme was known only due to the personal relationships the Algerian professors had with their peers from Italy and Spain. The existence of the NEO was not known at the beginning of the participation in the Action, but at a later stage.

Recommendation: considering that the university has limited experience of the Action and has limited contacts with the NEO even if they receives the NEO's notification emails from time to time, requesting a face to face meeting and/or telephone meeting with the NEO might be useful to clarify doubts and get a more detailed knowledge of the functioning of the Action.

Mobility implementation. The university opened the call for applications following the notification from the European partner university and sent all the documents to be completed to the applicants. The most significant obstacle in the mobility development was getting the visa because participants received it very late and in one case the beneficiary had to change his host university (from Cadiz, Spain to Istanbul, Turkey). The criteria taken into consideration for the selection process were the CV with the professional experience and the language level (English, Spanish/Italian). The commission that analysed the applicants' files made a list with the results. The staff didn't express any discontent regarding this step of the mobility. In terms of follow up of the mobility experience, there is an informal sharing of information with the colleagues. In addition, the research laboratories have to do a yearly report where they also list the Erasmus mobilities of their staff, which in turn helps them perform better in the yearly academic self-assessment.

Recommendation: transparency might be increased concerning the selection process, e.g. by publishing the ranking of the selection.

The most important need identified during the interview was to hire a dedicated International Relations administrator who would be responsible for the management, implementation and follow-up of European projects, including Erasmus+ KA107. Thus, the entire management of the Erasmus programme could be executed more smoothly since the administrator could dedicate his/her entire working time and attention to the Erasmus exchanges. The professor who is in charge of all the international exchanges developed an internal registration system concerning the participants, the departure and arrival dates, the number of exchange months and the names of the incoming and outgoing persons. He expressed the need for the staff to meet colleagues/peer staff who work on similar research topics. The biggest challenge in the credit recognition was identified as being the harmonization of curricula at the partner universities so that the ECTS and the courses studied could be validated upon return at the home university.

The participants in the interview said that they were satisfied with the Erasmus grant received from the European Commission and that the only financial hindrance was related to the health insurance (the health insurance they had bought in Algeria was not valid in Italy).

The main conclusion of the interview was that the Erasmus exchanges opened people's mind and horizons and improved their multicultural and communication skills. The beneficiaries gained more self-esteem and trust in their abilities to work and perform in the academic environment.

NEO

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 13th March 2018

Number of people interviewed: 1, NEO Algeria

KEY FINDINGS

ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED BY THE NEO as far as E+ KA107 ICM (referred as the Action) is concerned:

The NEO has a key role in promoting Erasmus+ KA107 (together with other relevant actions of the E+ Programme) towards Algerian HEIs and of boosting the visibility and the exploitation of the results at national level. Besides, another important role of the NEO is the monitoring and evaluation of the results of the action concerning each participating Algerian HEI.

To this aim, the following actions are conducted:

- Organisation of dissemination & exploitation events (e.g. info day during the Salon International du Livre, Algiers, 26/10/2017; journée internationale d'info E+, 07/11/2017)
- Circulating of the Programme official documents to Algerian HEIs
- Support for partner search through the circulation and collection of Partner search forms especially to help HEIs less involved in the Programme to increase their participation
- Organisation of information & monitoring visits at Algerian HEIs. Half day is dedicated to informing/training university staff on the Action; half day is dedicated to monitoring of the implemented mobility through meetings with past and future beneficiaries of the Action and comparison of the signed IIAs with the information available in the Mobility Tool (to be noted: the NEO has a partial access to the Mobility Tool as sensitive data are obviously protected for privacy issues)

The NEO has also a key role in terms of contact point with the donor, especially through interaction with both the DG Education & Culture of the European Commission and the EACEA at central level and the E+ National Agencies at the level of the Programme Countries.

In this framework, the NEO plays a key function as a collector of facts and figures that define the actual and concrete participation of Algeria in the Action: the NEO collects the relevant data and information by each participating Algerian HEI and then conveys them into the FLASH REPORT (EU model) to the donor.

Based on the overview that the NEO can have as far as the status of the Action in Algeria is concerned by and large, relevant feedback was discussed and collected. Therefore it is possible to identify a series of weaknesses and opportunities that it is worth mentioning:

Weaknesses:

- Limited overall participation of Algeria into the Action compared to the other countries in the Region.
- Limited or lack of participation of certain Algerian HEIs, especially those located in remote areas.
- Limited technical knowledge of the Action within Algerian HEIs and limited available expertise in terms of practical participation and management of the projects related to the Action.
- Limited or lacking procedures for the recognition (equivalence and recognition of credits and grades) of the experiences formally acquired abroad for mobility for study.

Opportunities and recommendations:

- To maintain the organisation of networking events among Partner country and Programme country HEIs to promote better communication, to increase mutual knowledge and trust by personal interaction such as the event that was organised in Rome last October 2017 with a focus on the Region of the Southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood.
- To organise training events targeting staff of Algerian HEIs to better promote the Action, to circulate detailed, accountable and technical information in order to increase both the awareness of and the expertise on the Action. The training events shall focus on writing a E+ KA107 ICM project application, analysing the official application documents, explaining the principles of the Erasmus Charter.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS & RECCOMENDATIONS ON ICM IMPLEMENTATION IN ALGERIA

Erasmus+ KA107 ICM is generally perceived as an important opportunity to further develop the international dimension of the involved HEIs, both by providing learning/training/teaching opportunities abroad to its students and staff and by offering more international learning/teaching opportunities at home to its academic community by and large thanks to international visitors. Such collaborations are perceived as bringing positive outputs not only to the participants in the mobility exchanges, but also their institutions themselves, which can both strengthen existing cooperation with historical university partners in Programme Countries and develop new ones with new institutions. In order to increase such benefit, as well as the number of mobility opportunities, a bigger involvement of Algerian universities into the Action is desired by both the involved HEIs and the Algerian NEO.

The involved HEIs have some knowledge of the Action, thanks to information events organised by the NEO, to ongoing cooperation with long term partner universities in Programme Countries and to personal contacts with peers in Programme Countries HEIs. Especially, the active presence of the Directors of the International Offices of the involved HEIs is fundamental to coordinate, supervise and manage at local level the participation of the HEI in the Action. Nevertheless, the need of reinforcing the human resources dedicated to international relations is commonly perceived, either by increasing the number of administrative staff working on the Action and other similar initiatives/programmes and by strengthening the knowledge and technical expertise of the staff already assigned to the management of the Action within the involved HEIs. Therefore dedicated information sessions and training events on the Action (i.e.: the way it is managed, the programme rules and regulations, the principles of the Erasmus Charter, the different phases of the Action

including the application to ICM calls, the preparation of the mobility and the follow up) would be very useful to train the staff.

When it comes to existing ICM ongoing Inter-Institutional Agreements, an improvement in the quality of the funded mobility exchanges could be promoted through a series of actions. On the one side, these can take advantage of good practices that the Algerian HEIs developed to respond to needs or face problems at the level of specific individual mobility cases. Such solutions might be applied to other cases as well. On the other side, Algerian HEIs could also benefit from the experience of the partner universities in the Programme Countries, by sharing experiences and analysing their procedures related to the management of the ICM Action which could then be adjusted and adapted to the context of the Algerian HEIs.

MOROCCO

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 3rd - 5th April 2018

HEIs visited: Université Hassan I (Settat), Université Abdelmalek Essaâdi (Tétouan) by Skype, Ministry of Higher Education (Rabat)

Country: Morocco

Team performing the interviews: Universidad de Granada, Spain; Cardiff Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

UNIVERSITÉ HASSAN I (SETTAT)

STUDENTS INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date: 3rd April 2018

Number of people interviewed: 3 (1 Undergraduate, 2 PhD)

Profile:

- ✓ Level and area of study: 1 Undergraduate student (Civil engineering), 2 PhD candidates (Applied Mathematics and Civil engineering).
- ✓ Gender: male.
- ✓ Duration of the mobility: 1 semester (5-6 months).
- ✓ Previous mobility experience: one of the PhD candidates informs on a previous scholarship implemented under the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 BATTUTA project.

KEY FINDINGS

Information & Promotion:

- ✓ The three beneficiaries refer that no info sessions or concrete actions aimed at promoting the available international mobility opportunities for students have been organised by their home institution. They mention that the full involvement of former exchange students in any info session or event organised to inform the university community on the international mobility opportunities would certainly encourage other students to participate in exchange programmes. A wider use of social networks (Facebook, Twitter...) is also suggested.

Application process:

- ✓ The general opinion about the application procedure is positive (average: 3.3/4) and no major problems have been reported. Nevertheless, some difficulties in the process of getting the invitation letter (PhD level) have been observed; one of the PhD candidates denotes that the process is too bureaucratic and that the number of requested documents is higher than desirable. The Undergraduate student mentions that having templates for the different requested documents could help the applicants.

Evaluation and selection:

- ✓ The overall perception of the evaluation and selection process is not negative (average: 2.8/4) although the process is perceived as uncertain to some extent. The students refer that no detailed and exhaustive information on the evaluation and selection criteria was published together with the offer of available destinations; furthermore, no detailed information on how the selection process would be carried out seems to have been provided in the published call for applications.

Preparation for the mobility:

- ✓ Two of the students (1 Undergraduate and 1 PhD) are fully satisfied (average: 4/4) with the services and assistance provided by their host institutions with a view to prepare their stay abroad. 1 PhD student shows a low satisfaction average (1,4/4) in relation to this issue and refers problems when requesting the VISA, some lack of information on the insurance conditions (how to proceed in case of health assistance is necessary) and a complete lack of language and intercultural preparation. The Undergraduate student remarks that more detailed information on the learning agreement and the ECTS system should be provided.

Implementation of the mobility:

- ✓ The three students are highly satisfied (average: 4/4) with the assistance received during their mobility experiences. One of the PhD candidates even extended his stay (from 6 to 10 months) on a self-financed basis. The contact with the supervisor was frequent and enriching for both PhD candidates and, in general terms, the three students received full support from their host institutions all along their stays abroad.

Recognition of the mobility period:

- ✓ The Undergraduate student feels very satisfied with the recognition awarded and underlines that the process was clear and quick. In the case of the PhD candidates, no paper-based proof of recognition has been provided (it is a rather tricky and underdeveloped aspect of the international mobility at PhD level, probably because no credit system is used). Even though, both of them are convinced of the really positive impact that their international mobility experiences will have in their academic and professional careers. In fact, thanks to the Erasmus+ ICM scheme, a co-tutelle agreement between the Université Hassan I (Settat) and the University of Granada will be signed which will allow one of the PhD candidates (the one who extended his mobility) to benefit from the experience to a much larger extent.

Additional comments: the three students underline that the experience has been highly successful and positive both from the personal and the academic point of view.

STAFF INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date: 3rd April 2018

Number of people interviewed: 3 (administrative staff).

Profile:

- ✓ Position and main activities: staff in charge of communication (Rectorate), general administration (Institute of Health Sciences) and international relations (Rectorate).
- ✓ Expertise in international mobility: 1
- ✓ Gender: female (2), male (1).
- ✓ Duration of the mobility: 1 month. All the mobilities have been implemented in the framework of the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 and not the Erasmus+ ICM scheme. One of the interviewed staff members has benefited from two mobilities (duration: one month each).

KEY FINDINGS

Knowledge about the Erasmus+ ICM scheme and information about the programme:

- ✓ None of the beneficiaries knows if there is a strategy - at institutional level - neither for international mobility of staff nor for attracting incoming exchange students.
- ✓ The beneficiaries learnt about the programme thanks to the colleague in charge of the management of international mobility at UH1. It is remarkable that there is only one administrative-technical staff member who manages the whole international mobility process at UH1. The participants seem to be very satisfied with their experience abroad and the support received all along the mobility but they considered that more staff members should be working in the International Relations area. They have also highlighted the outstanding support received from the host institutions.
- ✓ The participants found the relevant and necessary data to apply for the scholarship on the Internet and through the person in charge of the management of the international mobility programmes at their home institution.
- ✓ Two of them have remarked that they did not know about the existence of a National Erasmus+ Office in Morocco.
- ✓ No specific preparation or training has been provided by the home institution with a view to prepare their stay abroad. For one of the beneficiaries it was his first time outside Morocco.

Application phase:

- ✓ One of the beneficiaries underlined the difficulties faced to prepare the application package (e.g. preparation of the Europass CV and the working plan).
- ✓ The staff member in charge of international relations at UH1 mentioned that the main obstacles found, not only in the application phase but when managing the international mobility as a whole, are related to academic aspects (learning agreement, recognition process).
- ✓ No major problems have been reported.

Selection phase:

- ✓ Only the staff member in charge of the international relations at UH1 and therefore responsible for the management of international mobility programmes seems to know in detail the selection process. The other two beneficiaries are satisfied with the result of the selection although they have received no detailed information on the phases of the selection, the evaluation criteria and other key elements of the selection and nomination process.

Implementation of the mobility:

- ✓ The three beneficiaries are highly satisfied with the assistance and support received during their mobility experiences.
- ✓ The staff member in charge of the management of the international mobilities seems highly motivated and shows a deep knowledge of all the phases of the mobility. She makes reference to the efforts made by the Rectorate of UH1 to promote the participation of the students and the staff, both academic and administrative, in the Erasmus+ ICM scheme. She refers the different actions put in place before (info sessions in the three campuses of UH1), during (direct contact and follow-up of the beneficiaries) and after the mobility (recognition, meetings with beneficiaries upon their return).

Recognition:

- ✓ There is no institutionally established mechanism of recognition for the UH1 administrative staff participating in international mobility programmes (e.g. specific weight/extra points in promotion processes). Nevertheless, the three beneficiaries are fully convinced of the positive impact that their international mobility experiences will have in their academic and professional careers.
- ✓ It is surprising that, with the exemption of the staff member in charge of the international relations at UH1, the interviewed staff member seem not to use in their day to day work at UH1 the abilities and knowledge acquired thanks to the international mobility experience.

Additional comments: the staff member in charge of the international relations at UH1 remarks that harmonising the application mechanisms (tools, platforms, deadlines, documents...) of the HEIs taking part in the Erasmus+ ICM scheme would stimulate and facilitate the participation in programme.

UNIVERSITÉ ABDELMALEK ESSAÂDI (TÉTOUAN)

STUDENTS INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date: 4th April 2018

Number of people interviewed: 2 (PhD), the interviews were made by Skype and telephone.

Profile:

- ✓ Level and area of study: 2 PhD candidates (Natural Sciences).
- ✓ Gender: female and male.
- ✓ Duration of the mobility: 3 months.

- ✓ Previous mobility experience: one of the beneficiaries reported a previous scholarship (PhD level) under the Erasmus+ ICM scheme (Università degli Studi di Messina).

KEY FINDINGS

Information & Promotion:

- ✓ The two beneficiaries refer that they learnt about the Erasmus+ ICM scheme from their home university. They underline as the most useful information sources to promote the international mobility opportunities the following: social media (Internet), academic staff and former exchange students who have already experienced the mobility.

Application process:

- ✓ The general opinion about the application procedure is positive (average: 4/4 and 3,6/4 respectively). One of the beneficiaries denotes the excessive bureaucracy in the application process and a rather low support received by the IRO at his home institution.

Evaluation and selection:

- ✓ The overall perception about the evaluation and selection process is rather negative (average: 1,6/4). The whole process is perceived as unclear and opaque. Both PhD candidates score with 1/4 the information received about how the selection would be made (phases) and the composition of the selection committee. They refer that no list of applications received, eligible candidates and selected students were published. In addition to this, no procedure for appealing seems to exist; at least no information on this issue appears in the call for applications. They do not consider the evaluation and selection process as transparent and equitable and they score this aspect with 1/4 and 2/4 respectively.

Preparation for the mobility:

- ✓ Both beneficiaries are fully satisfied (average: 4/4) with the support received from their host institution in the process of preparing their working/research plan. In spite of this, they are not very satisfied with other important aspects of the preparation for the mobility such as insurance (average: 1,5/4) and language and cultural preparation (average: 1/4). In addition to this, one of them mentions the problems faced when applying for his Visa.

Implementation of the mobility:

- ✓ The two PhD candidates are highly satisfied (average: 3,8/4) with the assistance received during their mobilities. No comments or remarks are made.

Recognition of the mobility period:

- ✓ As mentioned by the interviewed PhD candidates from Université Hassan I, no paper-based proof of recognition has been provided (it is a rather tricky and underdeveloped aspect of the international mobility at PhD level, probably because no credit system is used). Even though, both of them are convinced of the really positive impact that their international mobility experience will have in their academic and professional careers.

Additional comments: both PhD candidates underline that the mobility experience has been really positive and that a longer period would have been desirable.

STAFF INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date: 4th April 2018

Number of people interviewed: 1 (administrative staff).

Profile:

- ✓ Position and main activities: administrative staff in charge of university financial management (Rectorate).
- ✓ Expertise in international mobility: 0
- ✓ Gender: male.
- ✓ Duration of the mobility: 1 week (5 working days), Erasmus+ ICM scheme.
- ✓ Additional information: interview made by phone.

KEY FINDINGS

Knowledge about the Erasmus+ ICM scheme and information about the programme:

- ✓ The beneficiary does not know if there is a strategy - at institutional level - neither for international mobility of staff nor for attracting incoming exchange students.
- ✓ The beneficiary learnt about the programme directly from the International Relations Office of his home institution. He also obtained information about this opportunity for international mobility through Internet.
- ✓ The beneficiary confirms that he had a meeting with the person in charge of the National Erasmus+ Office in Morocco before his departure.
- ✓ No specific preparation or training has been provided by the home institution, in addition to the support received during the application phase.

Application phase:

- ✓ The beneficiary does not refer to any major difficulty when preparing and submitting his application for the mobility.

Selection phase:

- ✓ The participant underlines the high level of uncertainty and lack of transparency in the whole selection process. No detailed information on the different phases of the selection, the evaluation criteria, the composition of the selection committee and other key elements of the selection and nomination process were provided.

Implementation of the mobility:

- ✓ The beneficiary is highly satisfied with the assistance and support received during his mobility. No major problems were encountered although he refers to the language barrier as a possible obstacle for the implementation of the mobility. He also mentions the problems faced when applying for his Visa.

Recognition:

- ✓ There is no established mechanism of recognition for the UAE administrative staff participating in international mobility programmes (e.g. specific weight/extra points in promotion processes). Nevertheless, the beneficiary is fully convinced of the positive impact that his international mobility experience will have in his academic and professional career.

Additional comments: all the interviewed students and staff have reported very good experiences and all of them have confirmed that the financial support received was sufficient to cover the travel, accommodation and subsistence costs.

The compulsory video recording that all UAE staff participating in an international mobility programme must provide on his/her return to report on the experience has been identified as a good practice (also useful for dissemination and promotion purposes).

MINISTRY

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 5th April 2018

Number of people interviewed: 1

Profile:

Name: **Noureddine TOUHAMI** (other three representatives from the Ministry were also present).

Position: Director of Cooperation and Partnership, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

KEY FINDINGS

An introductory session on the Higher Education system in Morocco, with a special emphasis on the internationalization process carried out by universities, is made by the Director of Cooperation and Partnership of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (Mr Noureddine TOUHAMI). He highlights the important role that international internships, also foreseen in the Erasmus+ ICM scheme, will play in the internationalization of Higher Education in Morocco and the development of skills and employability of graduate students.

It should be noted that there is no NEO in Morocco at this moment and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is playing its role. A new NEO will be appointed by the EACEA shortly.

Information, dissemination of information:

- ✓ The main communication channel with the HEIs is email.
- ✓ Specific meetings with the different universities participating in the E+ ICM scheme are organised (twice a year). These sessions are aimed at monitoring the implementation of the Erasmus+ ICM scheme in each Institution.

Ministry supervisory work:

- ✓ The NEO does not perform any concrete control related tasks in relation to the implementation of Erasmus+ ICM scheme in the Moroccan HEIs involved in the programme. The NEO performs exclusively information/dissemination actions, consultation tasks and monitoring activities.
- ✓ There is a remarkable work of information and contact with the HEIs participating in the Erasmus+ ICM scheme.

Data collection and statistics

- ✓ The NEO collects international mobility data annually from all Moroccan HEIs. The results are collected in an annual report.

ICM information sessions:

- ✓ As mentioned-above, twice a year training seminars for the Moroccan HEIs involved in the E+ ICM scheme are organised by the NEO. The main topics of these seminars are related to the drafting and formulation of international academic cooperation projects, the novelties about the program and the terms and conditions of the annual call for proposals.
- ✓ The NEO is responsible for submitting templates, information on calls and other related documents (guidelines, regulations...)
- ✓ According to the interviewed representatives, the main training needs in Internationalization issues in Morocco are related to the academic and administrative management of international mobility, especially the management of incoming mobility flows and the services offered to the received students and staff.
- ✓ In addition to this, a training need in the different aspects of the ECTS has been identified, especially in relation to its possible implementation in Morocco, as well as the different aspects concerning academic recognition.
- ✓ The NEO considers that preparation and accreditation in foreign languages is also as a major challenge.

Additional information:

- ✓ The high rate of young population in Morocco (60% is under 30 y.) and the quick increase of university population (almost one million student at this moment), have led to a growing interest in international mobility among the Moroccan university students and staff. In fact, this country is the one with the most significant internationalization experience among the neighbouring countries of North Africa.
- ✓ A considerable effort must be made to strengthen the staff (academic and administrative) capacities in different aspects of the internationalization of Higher Education, with a special focus on ICM.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS ON ICM IMPLEMENTATION IN MOROCCO

CONCLUSIONS:

Although the number of interviewees was small (5 students, 4 administrators and the NEO represented by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, no academic staff was interviewed), several common points arose.

Interestingly enough, all the interviewed students and staff members had benefited from an international ICM (Erasmus Mundus or E+) which results in a significant bias for this report. It could have been of interest and enriching to also interview those students and staff members who applied for mobility and were not successful. In any case, it is clear that not all the principles and rules covered in the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE 2014-2020) are always observed.

1. One of the principles of the Erasmus+ ICM is clarity and transparency. This was not evident in the selection process. It was not made clear before the selection what the criteria for selection were. After the selection, no lists of received applications, successful and non-successful applicants were published. Moreover, there was no knowledge of a formal appeal procedure.

RECOMMENDATION: Selection criteria should be agreed by the two universities and disseminated well in advance. A clear and accessible appeal procedure should be established.

2. The sending universities do not require any specific language requirement to the outgoing applicants and do not provide any language and intercultural preparation before the mobility (students and staff).

RECOMMENDATION: The HEIs participating in the E+ ICM scheme should agree on a minimum level of language proficiency and the accreditation system. The sending university should provide courses to meet this level and the host university should provide follow-up courses. These could be linked to intercultural complementary activities.

3. The impression was that all the phases within the mobility process are perceived as too bureaucratic by both students and staff (too many documents to be completed).

RECOMMENDATION: A deep analysis of the mobility related paperwork should be made; an effort to reduce to the minimum the number of documents to be prepared and submitted should be made by all the institutions involved in the E+ ICM.

4. The information provided about some practical aspects of the mobility such as the insurance was not always enough and/or clear.

RECOMMENDATION: More detailed and exhaustive information on all the conditions of the mobility grant should be provided. A sufficient preparation for the mobility should be guaranteed by both the sending and hosting institution.

5. The administrative staff working on the management of the E+ ICM refers the complexity of working with each partner university's application, nomination and admission procedure, also the different deadlines, at the same time. It is suggested to standardise administrative procedures and deadlines which could improve the efficiency of the process.

RECOMMENDATION: A suggestion to the EACEA could be made in the sense of providing templates, minimum standards and/or a common working framework (e.g. model for call for applications, deadlines, procedure for appealing...) for all the Programme Countries HEIs participating in the E+ ICM. This could facilitate the work of the Partner Countries HEIs when preparing the calls for applications, selection and nomination of grantees and would guarantee a more clear and transparent process.

6. Several beneficiaries pointed out that the application process was too burdensome to be handled by one person, no matter how efficient or motivated that person may be. It is suggested that be a formal and staffed International Office at the sending university should be set up - maybe with one member responsible for each faculty – to assist potential candidates in the whole mobility process (before, during and after). It was also noticed that the best training for administrators could be to have performed an international mobility and gone through the process themselves. This would mean that there should be forward planning so that the prospective staff members of the international office first completes a mobility before taking up their position.

RECOMMENDATION: The design and approval of a comprehensive training plan for the staff working at the International Office at Partner Countries HEIs should be seriously considered by all the HEIs taking part in the E+ ICM scheme.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✓ Concerning internationalization of HEIs in a broad sense, strategic plans for this concrete purpose should be designed and approved by the highest authorities in all the HEIs involved in the E+ ICM. A series of key elements should be identified in the corresponding internationalization strategies: objectives, stakeholders and indicators to quantify the impact of the ICM at institutional level.
- ✓ There is little knowledge, among students and staff, about the task performed by and even existence of a National Erasmus Office in Morocco. A more operative relationship between the NEO and the HEIs taking part in the E+ ICM scheme should be fostered. This would favour a better knowledge of the functions and tasks of the NEO among the university members.
- ✓ The dissemination about the Erasmus+ programme and the opportunities for international mobility offered by E+ ICM scheme should be enhanced.
- ✓ The staff in charge of the management of the E+ ICM both at academic and administrative level should be clearly identified in each participating HEI.
- ✓ A deep reflection should be made in relation to the importance of guaranteeing the recognition of the study/period abroad. In particular, a procedure to guarantee the effective recognition of international mobility periods of the staff (both for teaching and training) should be established by the home institutions.
- ✓ The Institutions should receive information and/or specific training on the eventual implementation of the ECTS in Morocco.
- ✓ All the HEIs taking part in the E+ ICM scheme should fully support and facilitate specialised training to the staff dealing with the management and implementation of mobility programmes.
- ✓ A need to receive training in the academic and administrative aspects of the international mobility has been identified. In particular, specific training focused on the management and the services offered to incoming students should be provided. A possibility could be the implementation of joint training courses delivered by Programme Countries HEIs. The main

objective of this action would be to exchange good practices in the field of internationalization of Higher Education.

TUNISIA

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 19th – 23rd March 2018

HEIs visited: University of Gafsa, University of Monastir

Country: Tunisia

Team performing the interviews: Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy; Université de Poitier, France

UNIVERSITY OF GAFSA

STUDENTS INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 21st March 2018

Number of people interviewed: 3

KEY FINDINGS

Three female students were interviewed.

Field of studies: Management, Computer Science, Chemistry

All three students had an international student mobility experience. However, their experience had been carried out in the framework of an Erasmus Mundus Action 2 programme (EMA2 E-GOV-TN) at the University of Vigo (Spain) for two students and at the University of Lorraine (France) for the third. The mobility periods ranged from a semester to an entire academic year.

None of the interviewed students had a clear knowledge of the current KA107 programme and of current exchange possibilities with Malaga and Granada (the only KA107 inter-institutional agreements active for the University of Gafsa). Indeed, it seems that no student mobilities have taken place in the framework of KA107 at the University of Gafsa since the beginning of the Erasmus+ 2014-2020 programme. Apparently, potential student mobilities were transformed into staff mobilities in the KA107 programme coordinated by the University of Granada, due to the absence of sufficient and/or valid student applications, mainly because of the lack of Spanish language proficiency (Spanish is not a very commonly studied language in Tunisia, and Granada required a proficiency certificate which is difficult to obtain/not of interest for Tunisian students).

Consequently, it was unfortunately not possible to assess student experiences in the framework of the KA107 programme at the University of Gafsa.

The following report thus deals with the mobility experiences of students outside the framework of KA107. Some issues such as application and selection processes were not discussed as it was not considered relevant to question students on procedures that were specific to a former programme.

Information and Promotion

Students were informed of mobility possibilities (EMA2) during the department/faculty info-days, through professors and friends and through the National Erasmus+ website.

According to them, the most efficient means of promotion are poster campaigns in the department/faculty buildings, social media and word of mouth. The students stressed that the University email address is rarely used by students.

Before the mobility

All three students did not prepare much for their mobility. In all three cases the Learning Agreement was prepared on arrival and not before departure. Though the students understood the purpose of the document, they had some difficulties in filling out the document and finding course equivalences. They also pointed out that the coordinators in both the host and home university were not sufficiently familiar with course equivalences and were difficult to contact and to discuss with.

Students declared to be unaware of the Erasmus+ contact person in their home university and said that they were helped by an agent in preparing their application.

Concerning visa applications, the students did not mention any difficulty apart from the fact that they needed proof of housing in order to apply for a visa. It was therefore important that the host university helped them quickly in finding accommodation.

During the mobility

Among the key challenges faces by the students during their stay abroad, interviewees reported (1) cultural integration difficulties (especially during the first weeks); (2) lack of dedicated support for international students; (3) late scholarship payments and scholarship amount which was not always considered as sufficient; (4) language barriers, resulting in difficulties to attend classes and pass exams: 2 out of the 3 students reported that they were not sufficiently fluent in the host university language and the host university did not offer them the possibility to take exams in English. One student also declared that the host university did not offer a free local language course as expected; (5) heavy workload; (6) higher academic requirements than initially expected, making it difficult to pass exams, etc.

After the mobility

Recognition is managed at the department/faculty level. Upon return at the home university, one student experienced difficulties with her grade conversion as the conversion was at her disadvantage. The student mentioned that situations of this kind may impact negatively on future admission to master courses/PhD studies. As mentioned above, one student did not validate any of her courses abroad due to linguistic difficulties. The third student complained that she had to prepare her Learning Agreement alone, with little support from her home/host institution. Upon her return, no credits were eventually recognised. All students shared the feeling that knowledge and

understanding of Erasmus+ and International Credit Mobility (including processes, requirements, recognition) by the local academic community is still rather limited.

Also, all 3 students found it difficult to accept their return as they wished to be able to continue their studies in Europe. They did not seem to fully understand the aim of an exchange mobility programme, as they clearly showed their intention to continue mobility and/or transform it into a permanent study abroad.

STAFF INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 21st March 2018

Number of people interviewed: 2

KEY FINDINGS

One male and one female administrative staff were interviewed.

Roles:

1. Head of International Cooperation and Erasmus+ contact point for the University of Gafsa. The Erasmus+ contact point is the administrative staff who attends National info-days and organises local ones in Gafsa. Besides this person, the academic staff of each department/faculty is responsible for the organisation of the department/faculty info-days where students who experienced mobility are invited to promote the programme.
2. Mr. Majdi Achref is the person in charge of Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus+ mobility flows, as well as the Head of scientific research and academic assessment. He used to take care of the entire process for EMA2 from promotion, to selection and recognition of credits, from preparation before mobility to de-briefing after mobility.

Both interviewees had previous mobility experience (in Morocco, Italy and Romania), but only in the framework of EMA2 (AL-ISLAH and AL-IDRISI) and not Erasmus+ KA107. One of them is about to benefit from the first KA107 mobility. Indeed, it seems that no staff mobilities have taken place so far in the framework of KA107 at the University of Gafsa since the beginning of the Erasmus+ 2014-2020 programme.

One of the interviewed staff had average knowledge of the current KA107 programme and exchange possibilities with Malaga and Granada but does not deal with student mobility, whereas the other staff unit had much better knowledge being the contact person for those projects and for the KA107 application with the University of Grenoble submitted in February 2018. This second person had the opportunity to increase his knowledge during the 3 mobility experiences at the IRO of the host institution, where mobility matters were dealt with. Despite this experience, he does not think to have a complete knowledge of current mobility programmes.

The present report deals partially with the mobility experiences of staff outside the framework of KA107 and partially with management of staff and student mobility.

In April 2018 the first administrative incoming staff mobility is expected, whereas the first incoming student mobility under KA107 is expected in the first semester of a.y. 2018/19.

Information and Promotion

To date, as reported by the interviewees, the University of Gafsa does not have a dedicated promotional strategy for international mobility. Its promotional efforts are mainly focused on attracting international (mainly African) degree seeking students. The promotion of mobility agreements among potential beneficiaries was deemed insufficient. The only official promotion tool is massive emailing; the rest goes through word of mouth.

Finding new European partners to activate new mobility agreements is one of the main difficulties at central university level. Interviewed staff would wish for a stronger involvement of academic staff in proposing the University of Gasfa as partner for EU universities which they collaborate with on other projects. Students are, conversely, proactive in their quest for information about mobility opportunities.

The very little number of mobility agreements is considered a barrier against student mobility, together with visa and language issues. The scholarship (for both students and staff) may be enough or not, depending on the mobility destination. In general, private savings are deemed a prerequisite for mobility.

Selection procedures

Mr. Majdi Achref pointed out that the University of Gafsa is not actively involved in the drafting of the inter-institutional agreement or in the identification of selection criteria for student mobility. He reported that it is usually the European partner to propose their models and procedures. A higher cooperation (e.g. joint student selection) by the European partner would thus be desired by the University of Gafsa.

Also in the case of staff mobility, the host institution manages the selection process which is based on criteria such as language proficiency and professional experience. The University of Gafsa previously selects applicants based on internal strategy of HR development and on the training programme proposed by the applicant. In general, it is observed that the University of Gafsa facilitates mobility of IRO staff.

Before the mobility

All needed information was given by the host institution before departure to outgoing staff. The activity programmes and aims of the mobility were agreed before departure and respected. One of the interviewees mentioned that the visa required a very long time to be issued.

During the mobility

One of the interviewed staff members mentioned cultural differences and integration difficulties on arrival and the need for more personalised support: e.g. the host university was very far from the closest airport and, despite all possible information was given to facilitate arrival, none went to the airport to pick-up/called to verify that the journey was fine (cultural differences and perceptions of safety).

No language issues were mentioned for staff mobility, despite language is deemed to be one of the main barriers against student mobility.

After the mobility

Mobility was considered a positive experience which gave motivation for doing a better job at the home university, in terms of being more dedicated to support and encourage staff and students to undertake a mobility experience.

UNIVERSITY OF MONASTIR

STUDENTS INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 23rd March 2018

Number of people interviewed: 4

KEY FINDINGS

Profile of the interviewees:

1. Last name: ELWASLI
First name: Fatma
Age : 27
Host University: METU, Ankara, Turkey
Academic year of the mobility: 2016/2017
Level of the mobility: PhD
Academic field of the mobility: Mechanical Engineering
Type of mobility: study activities, Erasmus+
E-mail : elwaslifatma@hotmail.fr
2. Last name : BEN TEKAYA
First name : Asma
Age : 24
Host University: Università degli Studi di Messina, Italy
Academic year of the mobility: 2016 and 2017
Level of the mobility: Master
Academic field of the mobility: Biotechnology
Type of mobility: one ICM mobility in M1 for study activities and a second mobility in M2 for research in laboratory
E-mail : asmatekaya@hotmail.fr
3. Last name : BRICHNI
First name :DHOUHA
Age :21
Host University: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Spain
Academic year of the mobility: 2017/2018
Level of the mobility: 3rd year of bachelor, 1st semester
Academic field of the mobility: Bachelor in Languages (Spanish Literature and Civilisation)
E-mail: dolly.2015@outlook.com
4. Last name: Mabrouk
First name : Myriam

Age : 22

Host University: METU, Ankara, Turkey

Academic year of the mobility: 2016-2017

Level of the mobility : 2nd year of bachelor, 1st semester and 3rd year of bachelor, 2nd semester

Academic field of the mobility : Bachelor in Electronics

Type of mobility: Erasmus+, study activities

Information and Promotion

Students were informed about the Erasmus+ ICM call for applications through a notice board at the Department and by professors, but one of the students pointed out that the poster wasn't very visible and that many colleagues of hers hadn't noticed it or noticed it too late (see Staff interview: the notice is published for a short period to limit the number of candidates). In general, all interviewed students commented that the application is open for a too short period of time. They also participated in the info days organised at the departments: many students were present but only few of them applied. Info days were deemed useful by interviewed students.

They commented that Tunisian students are not very attracted by international mobility, and that professors can play an important role in stimulating the students to participate.

The application procedure was easy and clearly described on UM website, even if there was little time to gather the required documents (one student pointed out that it wasn't the first time she applied, but previously she couldn't gather all the documents due to the short notice). They were either supported by their professors or found the relevant information on the university website. On the other hand, they didn't seem to be aware of the selection criteria, even if they were published in the website and on the notice board, as UM staff showed us.

Interviewed students also added that they didn't know the composition of the Evaluation Committee and expressed the desire for the committee composition to be published on the notice board. One of the students would have liked to appeal against her rejection for one application but she was not aware of the procedure to do so.

Before the mobility

3 students out of 4 had to prepare the study plan for the Learning Agreement by themselves, however they had some support in the choice of courses from their supervisor in Monastir and it was easy to get the signatures, except in one case. The main difficulty was to find equivalent study activities at the host university and one of the students had to change her Learning Agreement more than once both before and during the mobility.

Students were supported in the visa procedures both by UM and by the host university, they experienced minor difficulties. No problems were reported with the insurance.

No linguistic preparation was necessary for these students, the study activities at the host university were held in a language they knew. However, students noted that the University of Monastir does not offer free language courses for students before departures.

No cultural preparation was offered either by the home or the host university, resulting in cultural challenges for some of the interviewees. One of the students said that she did not feel ready for departure, the time for preparing and finding a place to live was too short. Another student reported

to have been surprised by the Italian education system, by the fact that there are oral exams. Another student said she didn't expect to have so much spare time/course schedule flexibility, and that it was not easy to choose courses and organise the day by your own when you are used to have a fixed programme (in Tunisia there are classes every day from 8.30 to 17). On the contrary the students who have been in Turkey said they didn't know that the attendance was mandatory and that there are tests every week.

During the mobility

All the students were able to find accommodation with the help of the host university, at least for the initial period and were supported by the host university (IRO, local supervisor, buddies and ESN) with arrival and settling information. Only one of the students complained about the arrival and the fact that she didn't feel supported with the first administrative procedures (she couldn't find where the IRO was).

All the students complained they haven't been contacted by UM during the mobility, even if two of them were in Turkey during terrorist attacks. One of the students, who did laboratory research, complained that there was no academic follow-up during the mobility.

3 students out of 4 wanted to extend their mobility period: in 2 cases it was not possible to extend the financing, so they weren't interested; in 1 case, it was possible but when the student learnt that extending the scholarship would have meant not being able to do another mobility period (due to the 12 months/cycle rule) she decided to apply in the next call to do a second mobility period for research. One of the students, on the contrary, had to reduce her mobility period because she could not find a supervisor for her research (she only did S1 when she could take exams).

Issues with the scholarship payment: in 2 cases there was a delay of the first payment, in 1 case the payment were interrupted after the extension until the new Learning Agreement was signed. The amount of the scholarship was sufficient for all the interviewed students (at least to live, not to visit the area), but in general they were advised to bring personal savings to face any inconvenience.

Recognition of mobility activities (studies) upon return

Only 3 out of 4 students had already completed the recognition process, for 1 it was still ongoing.

They reported that the recognition was ensured as expected, since they completed the study activities they were supposed to carry out. As to the conversion of the grades, it took some time in one case and the department scientific council had to meet in order to decide. No one complained about problems with their GPA at the home institution following the grades conversion. The student who is still waiting for the recognition fears that delays in this procedures may postpone her graduation and jeopardise her application for master degree courses.

STAFF INTERVIEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 22nd and 23rd March 2018

Number of people interviewed: 5 (3 administrative staff and 2 academic staff)

KEY FINDINGS

The profiles of the 5 interviewed staff units are very different:

- Prof. Mnaouar CHOUCANE, Professor in Mechanical Engineering (Ecole Nationale d'Ingénieurs de Monastir), did a 2-week teaching mobility at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece) in the framework of KA107. He also did a mobility under KA2 Capacity Building programme in Algeria (short mobility strand). As he is not involved in the implementation of the programme, not all questions were pertinent.
- Prof. Anis HAJ SAID, Computer Science Assistant since 2010. As former head of the Department of Informatics, he was a member of the Scientific Council and was also in charge of supporting students in the preparation of their Learning Agreement for Erasmus mobility. He also experienced KA107 mobility in 2016 (Staff Training week mobility in Bialystok University Poland).
- Mrs. Saoussen HARZALLAH BIZID, Erasmus+ contact point for the University of Monastir, international projects coordinator at the central office of the university.
- Prof. Abdelkader BOUZIDI, Head of International Cooperation at the University of Monastir. He spent a Staff Training week in DEUSTO (Spain) and one in METU (Turkey), both of them about management of Erasmus+ and H2020 projects. He knows ICM due to his position at the UM and participation as UM delegate to National Info Days on Erasmus+.
- Mr. Ridha BEN ABDELHAFIDH, Secretary General of the Institut Préparatoire d'Ingenieur, spent a Staff Training week at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece). Has a limited knowledge of ICM, as ICM is not common in his institution.

International Mobility Experience

3 interviewees out of 5 have participated in an Erasmus Training Staff Week. They agree that the programmes were interesting, focusing on workshops, presentation of good practices, etc; the agenda was sometimes tight but well organised, included social programmes and in most cases could be adapted according to specific needs/interests (e.g. visiting departments/meetings colleagues).

Negative points: when teaching activities were planned, the interviewees complained that they had to organise them without any support from either the home or host university and that, due to the tight Staff Week agenda, it was difficult to give 8 lecture hours per week. Prof HAJ SAID had planned to take advantage of the visit to meet the Polish colleagues involved in the ICM agreement between the two universities and get a better knowledge of the educational offer in Bialystok, in order to better support Monastir students in the choice of the study activities to be carried out during their Erasmus mobility in Poland. Due to the tight Staff Training week agenda and maybe to the language barrier, he was only able to meet the Head of the Department of Informatics there.

In general, it seems that no systematic training or preparation prior to mobility was organised by the home university, but the interviewees knew to whom they may ask for support at UM and they confirmed they were helped when necessary. About the language preparation, one of the teachers suggested that the language proficiency may be one of the main obstacles for the participation to ICM, since the mobility opportunities for staffs who do not master English are limited.

Information and Promotion

3 out of 5 interviewees are, at different levels, involved in the implementation of ICM.

Those who are not directly involved stated that they know the programme through the calls for applications launched by UM, via the university website and via institutional emails. It is not clear how accessible the information is, since for Prof. CHOUCANE it is deemed to be transparent and easily accessible, while Mr. Ridha BEN ABDELHAFIDH found out about the ICM very late via word of mouth and through an institutional mail sent by University of Monastir (he didn't know that also staff could benefit from mobility).

As to the other interviewees, Mrs HARZALLAH BIZID is in charge of the implementation of the ICM at UM and Prof Abdelkader BOUZIDI is the Head of International Cooperation, so they are well aware of the programme and could provide relevant information on how the ICM is managed at a central level.

On the other hand, Prof Haj Said's position, as teaching staff involved in the implementation of ICM at a departmental level, had a different point of view. He pointed out that the promotion of such activities inside the university is not sufficient: the Department wasn't informed on the KA107 agreement set up with Bialystok University from the beginning, he was only contacted by the central office when the Polish university specified that the student mobility flows should be in Computer Science and asked to launch a selection for candidates.

Prof Haj Said attended the Erasmus+ info-days organized at the University of Monastir but in his opinion the information given was very general and could be easily found on the internet. He suggested to provide also slides or examples of good practices for applications.

Application and selection procedures

The University of Monastir has efficient procedures for every step of KA107 mobility. They provided UNIPD and UP with relevant documents and web links concerning the call for applications, the selection procedure and criteria.

According to all the interviewees, the application and selection procedures for KA107 are clearly explained on the university website, with also details of mandatory and optional documents, as well as downloadable templates. The call for application is published on the university website, Facebook page and put up in all the university buildings. The minimum duration of the call is 10 days. It is worth mentioning that, from the point of view of the students, the application period is too short to gather all the necessary documents, but for the ICM management unit at UM, this period is sufficient to get a high number of applications, especially in consideration of the very limited number of available scholarships. The selection criteria are listed on the website, both for staff and for students (examples: language proficiency, professional level and role for staff, previous mobility experiences or not). The only missing information is the composition of the evaluation committee, which students would like to know. Selections are done according to the calculated scores and number of places available. If no students are selected for a specific call and there is still time

before the mobility period, UM launches a second call. If there's not enough time, the not-awarded scholarship is offered as additional scholarship for the subsequent call.

Agreements which involves all study areas/more than one department/faculty are managed centrally, the others are managed at a department/faculty level. As an example, for the agreement in IT with Bialystok University, the call for applications is promoted at a departmental level, with a notice, news on the website and mailing list and there is a departmental selection committee. If students don't have an English language certificate, they need to pass an English test. The selection results are then sent to the central office. On the contrary, Prof. CHOUCHANE explained that the School of Engineering was not involved in the submission/selection process, as the entire procedure was managed centrally by UM. He was not aware that professors could ask for the proposal of agreements with specific European universities of their interest.

In all cases, it's UM that manages the applications, decides deadlines and selection criteria and drafts ranking lists which are sent to European Universities. The host universities directly contact students in the ranking order established by Monastir and offer them a mobility. If a student is not contacted within 2 weeks from the beginning of the mobility period (i.e. mid-September for S1 mobility and mid-February for S2 mobility), it means the student has not been selected.

Preparation and implementation of student mobility

Students are informed on general and practical issues by the Erasmus contact person at the University of Monastir, whereas the academic issues (including the Learning Agreement) are managed by the department/faculty. Once the mobility has started, students are contacted regularly. They are well aware of the contact persons and know who they should refer to, according to the issue.

The support for the Learning Agreement is always offered by the department/faculty and not at a central level: by the PhD director, by the director of the master's degree course, by the director of the department, etc. Upon return, the credit recognition and the score conversion are managed by the Scientific Council of the department/faculty, which is composed by elected teaching staff members who elect the director of the Council. The procedure is very slow.

Students are asked to present their mobility experience in the framework of info-days, as success stories. UM keeps statistics of mobility flows and is now preparing a template for Staff and Students reports, to be filled out upon return.

BEST PRACTICE/UNDERTAKEN IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS:

- Checklist for student application documents prepared by UM
- Application document templates can be downloaded by UM website
- UM is preparing a template for Staff and Students report, to be filled out upon return
- Use of statistics on mobility to implement support and services for outgoing staff/students
- Erasmus+ Facebook page for those departments with high mobility flows
- Application for new agreements according to requests coming from professors/students and base on pre-existing relations with foreign universities
- Ranking lists will be published on UM website too
- UM has agreement with halls of residences for incoming students: for the same rent amount of Tunisian students, incoming students can benefit from a single room and room cleaning

- twice a week instead of once. All incoming students have a contact point who lives in Monastir (not all professors/staff do) for better support.
- International promotion strategy: better exposure of UM on medias, catchier institutional website and implementation of the English part of the website, better positioning in international rankings.

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dates: 19th March 2018

Number of people interviewed: 1

KEY FINDINGS

The Tunisian NEO's staff was in the process of being renewed during our visit (probably April 2018). The previous mandate expired in December 2017, that's why a delegate of the *Direction Générale de la rénovation des programmes et de la pédagogie* was interviewed instead of the director of the NEO. The renewed NEO should be on duty from April 2018.

The National Erasmus+ Office (NEO) in Tunisia is located in Tunis and is composed of a director, two assessors, a representative of each Tunisian Higher Education Institution (HEI) (13 HEIs) and, for each HEI, a representative of each training centre/institution (institute/faculty). This representative is member of the academic staff.

The NEO mainly has an information and coordination role: to facilitate the management of projects and partnerships, to inform the Tunisian universities about National priorities, to coordinate universities at National level, but also to directly support students and teachers who ask for information about the International Credit Mobility (ICM).

In order to communicate with the HEIs and to inform them about ICM, the Tunisian NEO uses a dedicated website (<https://www.erasmusplus.tn/en/>) and a mailing list, to which students, teachers and HEIs can register to receive regular information. Besides, the NEO also makes use of social networks like Facebook and Twitter to disseminate the main information. The NEO also has access to the Ministry of Higher Education platform, which contains the database of all students, teachers and professionals in the sector of higher education.

The NEO directly organizes Erasmus+ information days (info-days) for students and teachers. National info-days (up to 4 per year) are held in Tunis to present the ongoing European calls, and 13 regional info-days per year are held in the universities (the latter dedicated mainly to teachers and staff). There are also information days in each HEI. These meetings are not specifically about ICM, but about all mobility programmes. National info-days are by invitation and open to delegates from each Tunisian university, while local/regional info-days are open to all. Students that take part in these info-days are mainly masters and PhDs.

The NEO can provide guidance on the scientific fields to prioritize for mobility, but it is only an indication of priority at the National level. There is no real control over the implementation of ICM at the level of the HEIs, which autonomously manage conventions, appeals and selection of candidates in their preferred fields. The NEO expert committee (made up of the 13 representatives

of the HEIs) can support the HEIs that contact it. For the future, the new NEO will try to set common procedures for selection, to ensure equal procedures in all universities. For this reason, ICMED Toolbox for ICM is considered very useful.

All the grantees' lists are forwarded by the HEIs to the NEO at the end of each year, but the NEO does not collect any information on the inter-institutional agreements established by the Tunisian HEIs. In addition, the NEO does not have access to the Erasmus+ Mobility tool, nor did know that it can also access it.

The NEO has not planned any specific training activities on ICM for HEIs and the information days organized by the NEO are dedicated to the Erasmus Program in general, not specifically to mobility and ICM. Besides, these info-days are not training days.

NEO does not provide HEIs with templates, HEIs rely on systems adopted in other mobility programs (thus not meeting the specific/new requirements of ICM) and each university can manage it in quite different ways. It is useful to envisage these templates in the ICMED toolbox.

During the training period provided by ICMED, the staff of Universities involved in ICM could benefit from specific training in the following subjects: managing the recognition procedures, checking the equivalence between the courses, supporting the students in the preparation of the application and study plans, support students to have good mobility, advice, orientation also on the choice of the host university, etc. The NEO representative pointed out that the training should cover very practical aspects, not only administrative but also academic, by presenting good practices or examples: who pays for housing, how the scholarship is paid, etc. It would be appreciated to have training on incoming mobility in Tunisia: as there is little incoming mobility, the staff does not know how to manage it.

Potential improvements in ICM : to extend the duration of the agreements (e.g. 5/6 years instead of 2) to better promote and manage mobility; to adapt the student grant to the cities of destination (the amount of the grant is generally sufficient but they have received complaints from students who have stayed in Paris, for example); to obtain concrete support from EACEA with visa applications because nowadays the delays are too long (3 months, there are no preferential channels for students who have already received approval for mobility) and the procedures are complicated: the NEO could collaborate with the consulates and collect the student visa applications centrally. Students currently need to apply via external agencies (TLS, Almaviva) which offer a paid service. They also need to go to Tunis several times as Consulates/Embassies are located there (the cost of this trip is a problem for some students). The academic and administrative staff generally do not have visa problems, as they have different passports.

The director of the NEO is in contact with the EACEA, he takes part in the information days organized in Brussels.

Despite the fact that we could not interview someone actively involved in the NEO, we gathered relevant information on the tasks of the Office, on its activities and on the management structure. The overall impression is that the Tunisian NEO mainly provides information on the structure of the Erasmus+ Programme and on the available opportunities, with a very limited influence on the HEI's strategies and on the local management of mobility agreements, at least for what ICM is concerned. In fact, the NEO hasn't developed any national database on the active agreements, and seems to lack a global perspective on the development of ICM partnerships in the country. On

the other hand, the Ministry plans to expand the NEO's influence in the future, especially providing guidelines to Tunisian HEIs to establish standard procedures for evaluation and selection.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS ON ICM IMPLEMENTATION IN TUNISIA

At the moment, a strategy to attract incoming students is missing, whereas a strategy exists for degree seeking students in both the University of Gafsa and the University of Monastir. The focus is mainly on Maghreb students, who are expected to more easily overcome barriers such as language and local culture.

Language is considered the main barrier for everyone (staff and students) in both universities for both incoming and outgoing mobility flows. Language is an issue related both to the possibility for students of following classes and taking exams in the vehicular language of the host university (local language or English) and to the ability of staff to teach in English or in the local language. That difficulty also depends on the language and it is almost null for French, low in many cases for English, whereas high for other languages such as Spanish.

Standardisation of application/selection procedures and documents decided by the central NEO could be of great support to deal with many of the highlighted issues.

MAIN BARRIERS:

- Language proficiency.
- Top students are sometimes reluctant to perform mobility, for either academic (it may negatively influence their GPA) or personal reasons (they fear they are not prepared, not ready).
- Few destinations and difficulty of establishing new mobility agreements, especially with French-speaking countries.
- It can be difficult to organize mobilities for L3 (semester 6) students, because Tunisian higher education system requests professional project (a kind of "light" master thesis). In addition, in institutions such as the Institut Préparatoire d'Ingenieur, courses are extremely intensive and no corresponding level of education exists in Europe (except in France, but is disappearing), therefore mobility is basically impossible. In these cases, students prefer to pursue their studies directly abroad.
- Availability of own economic resources: travel contribution can be insufficient depending on the country/city of destination. There are also practical problems related to the maximum amount of dinars that a Tunisian citizen can exchange per year (6.000 dinars/year = 2.000 euro).
- Length of staff mobility, especially if a substitute for teaching/administrative activities at the home university needs to be found.
- Visa (depending on the case, it can be an expensive and long process).

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

POLITICAL SIDE:

- Raise awareness in the European Commission for longer inter-institutional mobility agreements for the new Erasmus+ framework programme (e.g. 5 years), in order to allow for better management of flows and procedure with a longer-term and stability perspective, as

well as to allow for a more effective promotion of the agreements. The NEO/Ministry, as well as of EU Universities, should play a strong role in this respect.

- Negotiate with the EU easier visa procedures and/or lower visa costs, as visa is one of the main obstacles for student mobility. The NEO/Ministry should be strongly involved in this issue.

PRACTICAL SIDE (from general to more detailed suggestions for all Tunisian institutions):

- Standardization + toolbox. Strong role of NEO/Ministry in this matter for spreading best practices, toolbox and templates.
- Complete list of KA107 agreements published on the European Commission website. Strong role of NEO/Ministry in this matter.
- Increasing the number of mobility agreements/destinations.
- Attract international students, set incoming mobility flows (so far, no incoming under KA107. Some students applied but then declined). There is imbalance between incoming and outgoing students. Very few incoming mobilities are implemented mainly because UM offers very few courses held in English. Moreover, many outgoing students undertake their mobility out of the Erasmus+ scheme (e.g. "bourse d'alternance" or PhD in "co-tutelle").
- Activation of more degree courses held in English to attract incoming flows.
- Encourage students (also top students) to carry out international mobility.
- Professors more committed to Erasmus+ students and more involved (e.g. follow-up during and after mobility, support before mobility especially about the Learning Agreement and after about the credit recognition).
- Increase the number of administrative staff with proficiency in English, especially in the departments, who can manage international mobility, have contacts with foreign partners, international networks, etc.
- Offer of (inter)cultural preparation before mobility by the home university in order to ease integration.
- Longer calls for application published in local universities.
- Transparency in the evaluation committee.
- Assistance with health insurance (the requirements are not clear).

SUGGESTIONS SPECIFIC FOR THE SINGLE HEI:

- Better coordination between the coordinators of the home (UGAF) and the host university
- Clarify who the Erasmus+ contact person at the University of Gafsa is for student support
- Improve credit recognition mechanism (faster and more efficient) and marks conversion – UGAF
- Improve promotion of mobility opportunities for UGAF students
- UM IRO office should put in contact its students (even of different cycles) who go on mobility in the same host university at the same time