

International mobility – opportunity and problem. Proper preparation for studying at a foreign university.

Implementation period: 09.2018-

06.2021 Strategic Partnership in

Higher Education Acronym:

Stranger



Strategic partnership project Erasmus+:

- Wrocław University of Economics and Business, Poland – Project Coordinator
- Hellenic Open University, Greece
- West Ukrainian National University, Ukraine
- University of Pannonia, Hungary

The aim of the project is to prepare universities for the process of internationalisation. This goal is possible to achieve by ensuring better preparation of universities for admitting foreign students and better preparation of foreign students to take up studying in another country.

TARGET GROUPS:

- Universities understood as administrative employees and scientific-didactic staff.
- People who choose to study at university in a different country.

WHEN TALKING ABOUT FOREIGN STUDENTS, THERE ARE TWO THINGS THAT WE HAVE IN MIND:

1. Organised groups of students within the mobility of the Erasmus + Programme (usually for 1 semester)
2. Completing a full cycle of studies at university abroad.





In relation to the first group, it is possible to observe that its members are fairly well prepared as far as substantive matters are concerned by their home university. It is a sieve effect, a result of language tests, checking one's level of knowledge etc. However, it is possible to observe that they lack proper preparation in terms of cultural differences, standards of work in the country of exchange etc.

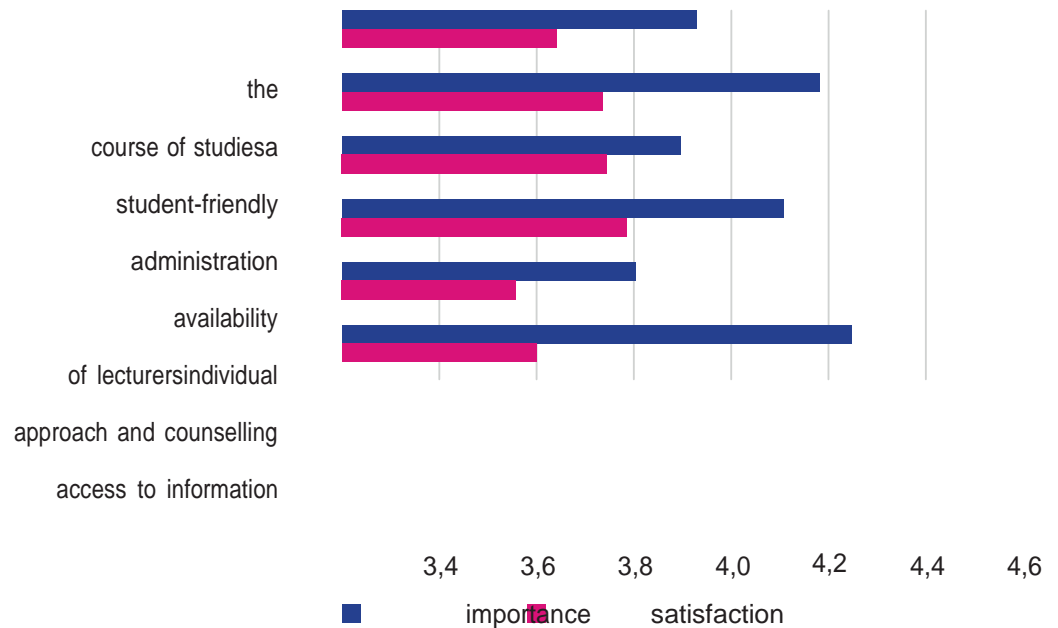
As far as the second group of students is concerned, we observed a lack of consistent preparation standards both in terms of substantive and formal matters. It manifests itself e.g. in poor knowledge of the language in which one intends to study (mastering only colloquialisms, lack of ability to write in a given language). For example, Polish and Ukrainian alpha-bets are completely different, which makes it very difficult for students to pass written exams. Students are admitted because universities care about internationalisation indexes and financial resources. At the same time, hardly anybody thinks about the real possibilities of fully engaging foreign students in the academic community and achieving success understood by them as acquiring high-quality skills and competencies during the course of studies.

In the project, we carried out primary quantitative research using the PAPI method (Paper & Pen Personal Interview). Target groups consisted of foreign students, administrative staff and academic teachers. The research which was conducted in four partner countries covered 366 students and 224 university employees.

Referring to the research results, it should be noted that there are differences in the perception of foreign universities and the process of studying there among students participating in the Erasmus+ exchange programme and those choosing the full cycle of studies. Significant differences were already found in drivers motivating people to study abroad – for students participating in the Erasmus+ programme, particularly important is the opportunity to improve their own competencies, while students from regular studies focus on improving their own position on the labour market and obtaining more attractive employment. Students taking part in the Erasmus+ programme reported significantly fewer problems during their studies than those from regular studies. In the case of the latter group, these problems mainly concerned contact with university administrative staff and adaptation to a different culture, as well as contact with academic teachers. Students from regular studies also evaluated the fulfilment of expectations at a foreign university lower in relation to the aspects important to them. The observed differences between groups of foreign students and their direction indicate that universities are less prepared to accept students for regular studies. Probably, it results from the lack of international standards applied to organised groups in Erasmus+ programme.

A crucial issue raised in the research was the importance of aspects such as the transparency of academic and student affairs, the course of studies, administrative services for foreign students, availability of lecturers, individual approach and counselling, and availability of information for respondents from different countries. While analysing this area, we tried to compare evaluations of importance of various aspects connected with the process of studying to satisfaction with their implementation at the foreign university (see Figure). The obtained results showed much higher expectations compared to the extent in which they are satisfied. All analysed aspects received much poorer satisfaction evaluations, with the biggest difference in “access to information”.

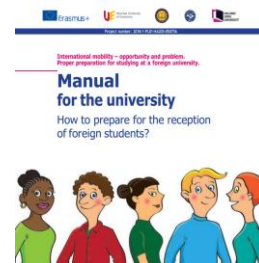
the transparency of academic and student affairs



Importance of specific aspects of the studying process vs. satisfaction with their implementation at the foreign university – comparison of evaluations

The Stranger project appeared to be abundant with the results of intellectual work useful for the proper functioning of the university in terms of suitable formal preparation for the admission of foreign students. They include:

1. **Manual for universities:**
How to prepare for admission of foreign students?
2. **Manual for students:**
What should I know before I go to study abroad?
3. Syllabus and didactic materials for training courses dedicated to administrative staff taking care of foreign students.



FIND OUT MORE:

<https://www.wunu.edu.ua/international-mobility/15972-ukrayinska-versja.html>