

Irina Ferencz, Kristina Hauschildt and Irma Garam (eds.)

Mobility Windows

From Concept to Practice

**ACA Papers on
International Cooperation in Education**

Lemmens



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This publication is the outcome of the MOWIN project – *“Mapping mobility windows in European higher education. Examples from selected countries”*. Covering a two-year period – from October 2011 to September 2013 – the MOWIN project was coordinated by the Brussels-based Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), and carried out in close collaboration with the DZHW (*Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung, formerly HIS-HF*), Germany, as well as the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) in Finland. The three organisations intended to explore the concept of mobility windows which is often used in the European higher education discourse.

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Executive summary

This study was produced with the financial support of the European Commission by a consortium of three organisations – the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), the DZHW (*Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung*, formerly HIS-HF) and the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO). It is the final report of the MOWIN project – “*Mapping mobility windows in European higher education. Examples from selected countries*” coordinated by ACA and implemented between October 2011 and September 2013.

The theme of this study is the phenomenon of mobility windows. The aim of the study is threefold: (i) to introduce a definition of mobility windows; (ii) to create a typology of mobility windows that reflects a variety of practices and models in the European higher education context; and (iii) to explore how different types of mobility windows are implemented in selected countries and institutions. The above-mentioned goals were reached by means of desk research and consultations with experts and practitioners, as well as a series of site visits to programmes with mobility windows in selected countries. Based on the three major research lines, the study makes recommendations both in terms of general practical advice for the design and running of mobility windows and for institutional and policy decision-making about mobility windows.

This publication consists of three parts. The first – conceptual – part articulates the definition and typology of mobility windows. The second – empirical – part explores how mobility windows are set up and implemented in real life, by looking at the challenges that occur at different stages of a mobility window’s life cycle and showcasing the identified solutions and best practices. The third – concluding – part summarises the conceptual and empirical analyses, by reflecting on the impact and implications of the matter under inquiry and by offering a set of general recommendations for practitioners and policy-makers.

Introduction (chapter 1)

This chapter introduces the European policy discussion on mobility windows and presents the research approach adopted in the MOWIN project.

Policy context and project rationale

International student mobility has become a central concern of higher education policy in Europe over the past decades. While ERASMUS has helped reduce several mobility obstacles, typical student exchange programmes often display certain limitations, e.g. in terms of recognition. Study programmes with structurally integrated mobility, which have existed in some cases since

the 1960s, have lately been re-discovered as “mobility windows” in the context of a European political debate on increasing mobility volumes. The relatively new and somewhat inflationary use of the term “mobility window” has opened up a lively, but at times confusing debate about the issue at hand. The lack of a precise, commonly agreed definition of a mobility window has prompted the MOWIN project to fill in this conceptual gap.

Project approach

The conceptual framework, which entails the definition and an elaborated typology of mobility windows, was based on desk research and the empirical analysis of 32 Bachelor’s and Master’s study programmes from selected countries (Finland, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Romania). Next, the elaborated framework was tested via expert consultations and an online survey of almost 100 international coordinators at higher education institutions in more than 20 countries in Europe. It was then applied to analyse the issues related to the implementation of mobility windows in real life.

Part 1. Mobility windows: conceptual framework

Review and definition of the term mobility windows (chapter 2)

The literature review reveals that the idea of a mobility window has been present in the European policy discourse over the last years. However, despite frequent references to this concept in practice, no shared understanding of the notion has emerged in the literature. While the term is a European invention, mobility windows are often perceived as forms of curricular integration of mobility and, therefore, come closest to integrated study programmes developed in the US several decades ago. The lack of scientific and political consensus about the definition of mobility windows creates a need for delineating the borders of this phenomenon. For this purpose, the following definition of mobility windows is proposed.

A mobility window is a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study programme.

Curricular embeddedness is defined by two criteria. Firstly, the foreseen mobility period is an explicit part of the home curriculum and study plan. The latter detail at which point in the programme students have to, should or can go abroad and for how long.

Secondly, the home curriculum and study plan create transparency about the possibility of recognising the stay abroad. (A part of) the experience made during the mobility window counts towards or supplements the degree.

The type of student mobility facilitated by a mobility window is physical and beyond national borders.

A mobility window is shorter than the degree it is embedded into.

Types of mobility windows (chapter 3)

Based on the elaborated definition of mobility windows, the two most important characteristics of mobility windows are identified: (a) the *status* of a mobility window (mandatory or optional) within the study programme and (b) the degree of *curricular standardisation* of the mobility experience facilitated through a window (highly-prescribed or loosely-prescribed). These two attributes form the backbone of the typology of mobility windows, which reflects different degrees of integration of mobility windows into study programmes and incorporates four major types (two ‘*extrema*’ and two hybrid types):

- optional windows with loosely-prescribed content (Op-Lop) – the most flexible type of windows;
- mandatory mobility windows with highly-prescribed content (Ma-Hip) – the most structured type of mobility windows;
- mandatory windows with loosely-prescribed content (Ma-Lop) – more rigid in terms of the mobility experience and more flexible in terms of content; and
- optional windows with highly-prescribed content (Op-Hip) – more flexible in terms of the mobility experience and more rigid in terms of content.

In addition, dimensions of secondary importance for describing different types of mobility windows are explored. Specifically, these are the *purpose* of a mobility window (e.g. study or internship), the *duration* of a period spent abroad, the *number of foreign partners* (from the programme’s perspective) or the *number of potential destinations* abroad (from students’ point of view), amongst others.

Part 2. Mobility windows in action: functioning, typical challenges and observed solutions

The empirical analysis of the selected study programmes with embedded mobility windows describes challenges arising at different stages of a mobility window’s lifespan and discusses the identified solutions.

Why mobility windows? Rationales at the study programme and the institution levels (chapter 4)

Nine broad rationales for developing mobility windows have been identified in the course of the interviews with programme coordinators.

Institution- and programme-focused rationales

1. development of closer cooperation with partners;
2. improvement of the quality of the study programme;
3. enhancement of internationalisation;
4. strengthening the international character of a subject field; and
5. integration of mobility into a joint degree programme.

Student-focused rationales

1. provision of better education possibilities for students; and
2. enhancement of students' employability.

Policy-focused rationales

1. implementation of institutional, national or European policy; and
2. increase in student mobility numbers.

Setting-up mobility windows (chapter 5)

Initiating and supporting mobility windows. Establishing and maintaining partnerships

A bottom-up approach to creating mobility windows is more frequent than a top-down method. Mobility windows are mostly launched and driven by individual enthusiastic academics seeking to secure support at the institutional, national and/or European level. The successful set-up of mobility windows ultimately requires effective multi-stakeholder partnerships and sustainable cooperation between different kinds of partners. Careful choice of partners is the most crucial part of establishing a window. Therefore, while building mobility window partnerships, institutions often rely on the existing, often long-standing collaborations and personal contacts. They are also guided in their search for potential partners by curricula, quality of research and teaching, geographical characteristics and language of instruction. The success of mobility windows thus depends on both individual initiative and top-down support at the institutional, national and European levels.

A one-way or a two-way window? One or multiple destinations?

The established mobility windows can focus on sending students abroad only (one-way windows) or serve the purpose of both outgoing and incoming mobility (two-way or reciprocal windows). The 'traffic' patterns of mobility windows also depend on the number of destinations (single or multiple) and type of agreements (bilateral or multilateral) arranged for the windows. Reciprocity of exchanges through mobility windows is a particularly important matter for institutions, even for those that are involved in one-way windows. Several factors can influence the balance within reciprocal mobility windows, such as prestige (highly competitive institutions often receiving more incoming students and 'losing' less), tuition fees (preventing students from opting for a given host institution) and language (with English-taught courses being especially popular with students), amongst others.

Who takes part in window mobility?

Net beneficiaries of mobility windows – students – are recruited for window mobility either at the entrance (enrollment) stage (typically, in programmes with mandatory windows) or at a later stage during the study programme (typically, for programmes with optional windows). The selection criteria usually represent a mix of foreign language skills, academic standing and student's motivation that can be assessed through language tests, the review of academic record, a project proposal, motivation letter and/or CV, as well as an interview with a responsible programme, faculty or administration official. Programmes/mobility windows can be either (highly) selective or *a priori* open for everyone. Student participation rates, especially in case of optional mobility windows, are subject to fluctuations: while some mobility windows become more attractive for mobile students over time, others lose their interest.

Advertising mobility windows

Higher education institutions use a rather typical range of information tools and marketing channels to promote their study programmes with mobility windows. Most frequently used information channels include:

- online marketing and print media (online and print promotional materials, such as brochures, flyers, posters, email circulations and websites), with social media being less frequently used;
- face-to-face contacts (individual advising and targeted information events, such as international orientation weeks, open days and education fairs);
- short-term study trips (e.g. summer and winter schools); and
- students themselves as 'ambassadors' of mobility windows.

Higher education institutions tend to perceive mobility windows as a distinctive selling point of a study programme. Students, however, are not so unanimous in their appreciation of mobility windows as a specific type of mobility arrangement. On the one hand, while being mobile, they are often unaware of going through a mobility window. On the other hand, some of them perceive a mobility period as an interesting add-on rather than the core of a study programme.

Funding mobility windows

Securing financial support is central for designing mobility windows, which inevitably results in additional costs. At the initial stage, the set-up of a mobility window draws on the resources of an institution which may not have been budgeted for the mobility window as such. While additional staff inputs cause ‘hidden’ costs in the process of setting up a mobility window, the cost for providing mobility scholarships is much more visible, being thus a top-level concern to organisers of mobility windows. Although mobility windows require start-up investments from institutions, the latter tend to support mobility windows in kind, e.g. by re-defining or adding to staff’s regular tasks, rather than in cash. As a result, public funding remains the major source of financial support for mobility windows. The financial pressure to sustain the operation of a mobility window sometimes necessitates scaling back, for instance, in terms of the number of partners involved, but also encourages the partners to diversify sources of funding for mobility windows.

Students’ motivations and expectations

Students’ motivations to go abroad ‘through a window’ are very similar to general mobility expectations. Thus, students are mostly driven by cultural (new cultures and languages), personal (life experience), study (different learning methods and environments) and professional (job-related and networking) expectations.

Integrating mobility windows into the curriculum (chapter 6)

Timing of the mobility window

Mobility windows are often organised at a later stage of studies – during the third year at Bachelor’s level and the second year at Master’s level – for several reasons. First, students are believed to be more mature and familiar with the home institution by this stage and, thus, better prepared to go abroad. Second, institutions often prefer to teach core studies themselves and send students abroad for specialisation or extra activities that can more easily fit the curriculum at a later stage of a study programme.

Building the content of the mobility window

Content offered through a mobility window can be rather diverse. For example, it can involve specialisation or professional studies, core or minor subjects, mandatory or elective courses, subject specific courses, and language and culture courses. Studying a specialisation abroad is the most typical solution given the fact that many institutions/programmes are inclined to organise a window at a later stage of studies. Mobility windows are usually centrally integrated into the curriculum.

Working to ensure window recognition

Study programmes mainly work in two different ways to ensure the recognition of mobility windows. Specifically, they can opt either for developing a joint module or a programme with partner institutions before sending students abroad or for using a learning agreement or a study plan agreed by home and host institutions for an outgoing student. The two approaches are sometimes combined. Although both methods seem to be rather efficient at ensuring smooth recognition, aligning curricula with partner(s) beforehand (e.g. with highly-prescribed content) can be considered particularly beneficial for establishing more transparent and routinised recognition procedures.

Organising and supporting window mobility (chapter 7)

Sharing responsibility – who does what?

The preparation of a mobility period in the context of a mobility window is usually a collaborative effort by the home institution, the host institution/programme and the student, whereas the volume of responsibilities shared and the degree of support provided for the student vary from one institution to another. Thus, some mobility windows are organised as ‘package tours’ in which almost everything is arranged for a student, while others provide some minimum assistance, for instance, in terms of information support. While tending to generally appreciate a high degree of support provided by institutions, students acknowledge the ‘formative’ importance of being involved in the organisational preparations for window mobility. Most commonly, the ‘load’ of preparation is somehow shared between all the actors involved. Accommodation is one of the biggest practical challenges for window mobility from a student’s perspective. The appropriate information about the *modus operandi* of a mobility window is also perceived as very important by mobile students. At the institution/programme level, the organisers of mobility windows are particularly confronted with a challenge of securing sustainable funding for mobility windows.

The evaluation stage (chapter 8)

Collecting feedback

Overall, institutions are interested in improving the processes occurring within mobility windows. To this aim, they often collect students' feedback and first-hand experiences in the form of reports and presentations/meetings with potential mobile students. Returning students are generally willing to share information about their host institutions and country which is an encouraging signal for institutions to draw on this valuable source of feedback. However, it is sometimes rather difficult to reach out to students after their mobility window period, particularly if it happened shortly before graduation. Therefore, alumni networks and social media can offer a handy, yet still underexploited, tool to stay connected with the 'alumni of mobility windows'.

Recognition

As also explained in chapter 8, mobility windows are found to offer transparent and 'smooth' recognition procedures. However, the latter can still be rather lengthy or problematic, for example, in terms of grade conversion.

Part 3. Conclusions and recommendations

The impact of mobility windows (chapter 9)

Benefits of mobility windows

Although the real numbers behind mobility windows seem to be relatively insignificant – both in terms of the number of windows and students going through them – mobility windows are widely seen to be instrumental in gaining more systemic effects, such as quality boost, improved international reputation, qualitative internal changes, increased staff mobility, closer cooperation between institutions and personal development of participating students. From this perspective, the value of mobility windows perceived both by institutions and students is found to be overwhelmingly positive, but not necessarily different from the perception of international mobility in general.

Recommendations (chapter 10)

In light of the key findings of the study, a set of recommendations can be suggested for the consideration of policy-makers, institutions and programme coordinators.

- 1) The 'internationalisation community' in Europe and elsewhere in the world is invited to discuss the proposed definition and typology of mobility windows.
- 2) Higher education institutions should develop institutional approaches to and intra-institutional partnerships for window mobility and curricular internationalisation in general. They should set up institution-wide policies, rules and regulations for the introduction and operation of mobility windows, inclusive of compensation packages for those staff in charge of organising them.
- 3) Higher education institutions are encouraged to explore the benefits of different types of mobility windows. They should aim to develop comprehensive internationalisation policies, of which outbound credit mobility in general, and window mobility in particular, should be key instruments – but by no means the only ones.
- 4) Ways to ensure sustainability of mobility windows should be explored at the institutional, national and European levels.
- 5) National governments and the European Union should continue to work on the removal of obstacles to student mobility, because the quantitative contribution of window mobility might be limited.

Abbreviations

ACA – Academic Cooperation Association

CIMO – Centre for International Mobility

CRUS – Conference of the Swiss University Rectors

CV – curriculum vitae

DAAD – Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (German Academic Exchange Service)

DZHW – Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung

ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

EU – European Union

ESN – Erasmus Student Network

ESU – European Student Union

EUA – European University Association

GTZ – German Association for Technical Cooperation

HIS-HF – HIS-Institut für Hochschulforschung

INCHER-Kassel – International Centre for Higher Education Research

LERU – League of Research Universities

LLP – Lifelong Learning Programme

Ma-Hip – mandatory mobility window with highly-prescribed content

Ma-Lop – mandatory mobility window with loosely-prescribed content

MOCCA project – “Model for core curricula with integrated mobility abroad”

MOWIN project – “Mapping mobility windows in European higher education. Examples from selected countries”

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

Op-Hip – optional mobility window with highly-prescribed content

Op-Lop – optional mobility window with loosely-prescribed content

SIU – Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education

For abbreviations of higher education institutions and programmes see Annex II.

1. Introduction

Irina Ferencz
Academic Cooperation Association

1.1 Policy context

Over the past decades, the international mobility of students has become a central policy concern of national governments and European Union (EU) institutions. Originally viewed as an exotic exception, a period of study abroad has over time become a much more established option. This notwithstanding ambitions are still outpacing achievement. In order to further increase mobility volumes, the European Commission and national governments have been and still are setting quantitative targets. Examples are

- the Council Decision establishing the second phase of the ERASMUS Programme of May 1989, which already refers to the “declared aim of the Commission” of enabling 10% of the student population to “*spend a period of study in another Member State at some stage during their university studies*” (European Commission, 1989);
- the ‘Bologna target’, stating that 20% of graduates in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) shall spend some time abroad for studies or an internship whilst in higher education. This goal was adopted by the education ministers of the countries belonging to the EHEA in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in the spring of 2009 (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009);
- the Youth on the Move Communication of 2010, demanding that, “*by 2020, all young people in Europe should have the possibility to spend a part of their educational pathway abroad*” (p. 4);
- the EU mobility benchmark, identical with the Bologna target, which was adopted by the Council on 28 November 2011, demanding that 20% of the European graduates from higher education would, by 2020, have studied abroad either for credit or degree mobility (Council of the European Union, 2011);
- targets set by national governments, amongst the most ambitious ones being those of Austria and Germany, which aim for a 50% share of students with a study-related experience abroad, i.e. either study or internship abroad (Ferencz & Wächter, 2012, pp. 44-45).

The fact that the vast majority of students in higher education still graduate without the experience of a study abroad period is usually attributed to obstacles hindering wider participation in mobility. European and national-level

policy makers therefore see it as their prime task to lower the hurdles standing in the way of higher volumes of international student mobility. According to Orr, Gwosć and Netz (2011, pp. 175-179) the following aspects are currently seen as major obstacles by students:

- a lack of financial means necessary to shoulder the additional cost of study abroad;
- the separation from a partner, children and friends; and
- a lack of (full) recognition of periods abroad and credits earned during these periods, leading to an extension of the overall duration of study.

A first significant attempt to overcome (some of) these obstacles in Europe was the ERASMUS Programme. It addressed the financial obstacle by providing grants for study abroad. Much more importantly, however, and differing from approaches in other international scholarship programmes, it created 'beaten paths' by putting in place a whole range of mobility-facilitating mechanisms. The latter became an obligation for participating universities. Chief among them was the promise of (ideally full) recognition of credits earned abroad, to be attained by agreements on the individual study plan of each student. There were and still are expectations that institutions provide accommodation, as well as counselling and tutoring for students. Compared to self-organised 'individual' mobility, ERASMUS has been aiming to create the advantages of a 'package deal'.

As successive evaluations of the programme have demonstrated, ERASMUS helped reduce several mobility obstacles and create pathways between universities in different European countries (e.g. Teichler, 2002). Recognition rates have been higher than in self-organised mobility (and also 'individual mobility' scholarship programmes). But recognition has rarely been 100% and study plans still have to be negotiated on an individual basis, as revealed by the evaluations conducted by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN, 2009).

Aware of these limitations of typical student exchange programmes¹, attempts were made by higher education institutions to structurally integrate a mobility phase into study programmes. Examples ranged from optional, but partly prescriptive study abroad programmes to double (and later joint) degrees. In such cases, the study plan abroad was no longer individually put together. It was either fully set, or there was a small set of options to choose from. Student choice was restricted, but the likelihood of recognition considerably

¹ It must be stressed that reference is here made to the minimum requirements of typical exchange programmes, including the ERASMUS Programme. There is, of course, nothing in the ERASMUS regulations which would prevent universities from pursuing ways of cooperation with a higher degree of curricular embeddedness. And indeed, many ERASMUS partnerships seem to use this opportunity.

enhanced. The study abroad phase became, for the institutions applying this model, an integral part of the overall curriculum of a degree programme.

One would assume that this approach was the result of the perceived limitations of student exchange programmes in general, and that it thus developed only after such models had been introduced, ‘tested’ and found not to be the final answer to the challenge of increasing international student mobility.

However, we are aware of at least one ‘embedded mobility’ programme which dates back to the late 1960s and quite a few which started to operate in the 1980s. Consequently, embedded curricula are older than ERASMUS (which was started in 1987)². It is thus not so much the existence of the ‘embedded mobility’ model that is relatively recent, but rather the attention the model receives. Additionally, it seems that the ‘embedded mobility’ model has become much more widespread in the past decade, although, as section 2.1 of the present publication further shows, we are not aware of the existence of any solid empirical data on this issue.

What has added to the recently enhanced attention paid to embedded curricula is the fact that the formerly nameless curricula acquired a name in the past decade. At some point in time in the 2000s, policymakers at European and national level, but also programme designers and academics at universities, started to refer to highly integrated curricula as “mobility windows” (see further details in chapter 2).

1.2 Project rationale

The relatively recent and somewhat inflationary use of the term “mobility window” has opened up a lively, but at times confusing debate about the issue at hand. The catchiness of the window image obscures the fact that several understandings of what the term actually means exist. As a result, the policy discourse suffers immensely from the lack of a commonly agreed definition of what constitutes a mobility window. Likewise, there has so far not been any attempt to classify mobility windows into main types, or to systematically examine their functioning. This is what the present study attempts to do.

More concretely, the study aims to:

- propose a *clear definition of mobility windows*;
- create a *typology of mobility windows* that reflects the variety of practices and models in European countries; and

² There is a link between ERASMUS and highly integrated partnerships even in those cases. The examples referred to all originated from the so-called joint study programmes, which were funded by the European Commission under what later turned out to be a ‘pilot scheme’ for ERASMUS.

- further investigate *how the different types are implemented* in selected countries and institutions, with the purpose of drawing broader lessons on the ‘DOs’ and ‘DON’Ts’ of such models and of finding examples of good practice at the level of study programmes.

The primary target group of this study is the international higher education community located primarily in Europe, as the study almost exclusively covers the European discourse and practice. The findings are relevant for higher education policy-makers involved at different levels of decision-making (European, national and institutional) as well as for practitioners working in European higher education institutions. Firstly, the study provides them with a common terminology, which shall hopefully result in a more focused discourse about mobility windows within Europe. Secondly, it puts forward a set of specific recommendations, outlined in the last chapter of the publication.

This publication presents the findings of the project *Mapping “mobility windows” in European higher education. Examples from selected countries* (MOWIN), which was carried out between October 2011 and September 2013 by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), the DZHW (*Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung, formerly HIS-HF*) and the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO). This two-year project was co-funded by the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2014), the Erasmus Multilateral Projects Action.

1.3 Project approach

Aiming to first review and then define the concept of a mobility window, but also to examine institutional practice, the study is qualitative rather than quantitative in nature. Attempts to additionally quantify this phenomenon were beyond the scope of the study.

The definition and the typology of mobility windows were produced by combining the results of *desk research*, i.e. a literature review (section 2.1), with the analysis of *other relevant projects* in the field.

Several versions of the mobility windows definition and typology were developed by the research team and then discussed

- twice via face-to-face meetings with the Advisory Board;
- via an *e-mail survey* by means of a semi-structured questionnaire, which was addressed to a sample of about 100 representatives of international offices at higher education institutions from more than 20 European countries. Although the response rate was not very high – just above

- 30% – the answers received nevertheless offered quite a detailed picture of what practitioners regarded at the time as mobility windows; and
- with the participants to the workshop “Mobility windows” organised in the framework of the ACA Annual Conference in June 2013.

With the purpose of finding real-life examples of the main mobility window types and of gaining further insights into their functioning and differentiation, the team selected *a sample of study programmes* incorporating such mechanisms and conducted site visits. The sample was constructed as follows.

First, five target countries, i.e. Finland, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Romania, were selected based on a mixed set of criteria. The sample includes countries

- located in different geographical parts of Europe;
- perceived to be at different stages in the internationalisation of higher education systems;
- with ‘unitary’ (delivered in one type of higher education institutions) as well as binary systems (delivered mainly in two types of institutions, usually universities and universities of applied sciences); and
- with different languages of instruction, but to which the project team would have access to, given that most target programmes would be taught in the national language.

The aim was not to make comparisons between these countries or to produce country profiles, but rather to identify various models or types of mobility windows in multiple national and institutional contexts, and ultimately be able to draw cross-country conclusions.

Second, we approached *five to nine institutions per selected country*. We tried to cover a mixed group of institutions by type (universities vs. universities of applied sciences, where existent), size (smaller vs. larger institutions), and location (capital city vs. more regionally-oriented institutions) in each country of our sample. At these institutions, representatives of the international office (or equivalent) were addressed through a *first e-mail questionnaire* and asked to identify within their institutions study programmes with mobility arrangements that met our definition of mobility windows. In some cases where programmes had already been identified by the project team beforehand, the programme coordinator was approached directly.

Bearing in mind the European policy discourse sketched above, we applied additional filters while selecting the sample of programmes and mobility windows:

- only programmes at *Bachelor's and Master's level* were considered, while doctoral-level programmes were excluded due to the great variety of practice in organising doctoral level education in Europe. We also focused exclusively on curricular and structural arrangements designed for sending students abroad (i.e. outgoing mobility) and not for receiving students from abroad, although the 'incoming' aspect is briefly discussed in chapter 5;
- only *windows with a minimum duration of three months (or equivalent to at least 15 ECTS credits)* were incorporated. This was a practical choice made in order to be in line with the European level approach, which only counts mobility periods longer than three months towards the EU mobility target. As a result, we mainly covered *mobility windows for either studies or internships abroad*. Other types of activities, like summer schools, language courses, or research projects abroad generally have a shorter duration.

Once we identified a set of programmes that complied with these additional filters, the respective programme coordinators were approached directly through a *second semi-structured questionnaire*. The coordinators were asked to confirm the information provided by the central level or gathered through a web-based search. We again opted for a 'mixed' sample comprising programmes in different subject fields, organised at various levels of higher education (Bachelor's and Master's) and of different durations.

Third, *site visits* were carried out to the programmes constituting the sample of the study. The visits consisted of

- one semi-structured interview with the programme coordinator or director in order to collect further information about the creation, functioning and benefits as well as challenges encountered in the implementation of existing windows³; and
- a focus group with students designed to capture the students' perspectives on windows and their value⁴.

³ In some cases, the programme coordinator was either joined by other members of administrative or academic staff knowledgeable about the programmes, or a separate interview was conducted with the latter.

⁴ Each focus group was supposed to involve up to ten students per programme, belonging to three categories: students that had already been abroad through the windows, students that were to go abroad through the windows in the near future, and students that did not plan to go abroad (where applicable). Having these groups represented (in the desired quantity) was not always possible, either because the students were abroad at the time of the visit or because they had already graduated, or because they were on holiday or had exams and could not take part in the interview. In some cases where the students could not be interviewed in focus groups, the MOWIN project team resorted to one of two alternative solutions: either to sending students the questionnaire by e-mail to collect their feedback in writing or to conducting individual interviews with the students by phone.

In total, 32 study programmes were covered in the analysis. These programmes represent a mix of traditional degree programmes – run by one higher education institution only – and of joint programmes – resulting in either a double or joint degree. They further represent a mix of more academically-oriented programmes, generally offered by universities, and more practically-oriented programmes, usually offered by universities of applied sciences. Three of the programmes are offered by a US-type Liberal Arts College in The Netherlands. A concise overview of each programme is available in Annex II. Chapter 3 provides further details on the mobility windows (42 in total) incorporated in each of these 32 cases.

The project team benefited, throughout the study, from the very useful advice and support of an international Advisory Board, composed of:

- Fiona Hunter, International Director, Carlo Cattaneo University, Italy;
- Jonna Korhonen, Project Officer and Data Analyst, European University Association (EUA), Belgium;
- Rok Primožč, Chairperson, European Student Union (ESU), Belgium;
- Alf Rasmussen, Director of the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU), Norway;
- Marina Steinmann, Head of Section “Bologna Process”, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Germany; and
- Ulrich Teichler, Professor emeritus and former Director of the International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel), Germany.

The members provided useful suggestions both for enhancing the quality of the project’s methodology and for developing the definition and typology of mobility windows.

1.4 Structure of the publication

In this opening chapter, Irina Ferencz from ACA sets the scene for the central theme of the publication – mobility windows. While putting this phenomenon in a broader European higher education policy context, the author introduces the *raisons d’être* for the MOWIN research project and the approach adopted by the team in order to conceptualise the notion of mobility windows.

The remainder of this publication is organised into three major parts. Part 1 consists of two chapters dealing with the conceptual framework of mobility windows. Chapter 2, contributed by authors from ACA (Irina Ferencz and Veronika Kupriyanova) and the DZHW (Nicolai Netz and Kristina Hauschildt), presents a short literature review on the mobility window issue and articulates the definition of mobility windows. Irina Ferencz and Dominic Orr (DZHW) proceed with conceptualising the notion of mobility windows by introducing

a conceptual background and a typology of mobility windows in chapter 3.

Part 2 consists of *five empirical chapters* which follow the logic of a mobility window life cycle and look at how mobility windows are designed and implemented by the selected programmes and institutions visited during the site visits. In chapter 4, Irma Garam (CIMO) explores the reasons behind institutional and programme decisions to launch and run mobility windows. Chapter 5, contributed by Irma Garam, Kristina Hauschildt, Veronika Kupriyanova and Queenie Lam (ACA), reviews a number of practical issues related to setting up mobility windows: cooperation between mobility window partners, students' motivations and expectations from this particular type of mobility, as well as student recruitment and funding aspects, amongst others. The empirical analysis is continued by Irma Garam in chapter 6 exploring the ways of integrating mobility windows in the curriculum and providing window recognition. The next stage of a mobility window lifetime – organisation and support of operating mobility windows – is analysed by Hendrik Schirmer and Kristina Hauschildt (both DZHW) in chapter 7. Part 2 is concluded by Kristina Hauschildt who analyses in chapter 8 the post-window mobility stage and the related issues of student feedback and recognition.

Part 3 aims to draw some conclusions from the conceptual framework and the empirical manifestations of mobility windows and to provide a set of recommendations for various stakeholders such as policy-makers (who can be interested in creating conducive environments for window mobility) and practitioners (who can be interested in setting up new or improving existing mobility windows). Specifically, Irina Ferencz looks in chapter 9 into the impact and the real value of mobility windows for study programmes and institutions, on the one hand, and students, on the other. Part 3 concludes the entire publication, by providing recommendations for window mobility at programme, institutional, national and European levels.

The publication is provided with a reference list and three annexes containing a list of tips for making mobility windows work (Annex I), the overview of the researched programmes and mobility windows (Annex II) and short biographies of the members of the MOWIN project team (Annex III).

Part 1. Mobility windows: conceptual framework

2. Review and definition of the term “mobility window”

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2.1 A literature review

To what extent do mobility windows represent a new phenomenon in the field of international higher education? Are they primarily a characteristic of the European student mobility landscape? Is there any consensus about the meaning of mobility windows in the scientific discourse and in the policy debate? These are the questions that guided the analysis of the origins, conceptual foundations and actual examples of mobility windows. The literature review involved scientific publications and practice-oriented sources, such as guidelines and recommendations on how to integrate mobility phases into study plans.

2.1.1 The origins of the mobility window concept

The concept of mobility windows is rarely mentioned in the literature on higher education and in the more specific field of international education. In fact, no use of this term was found in the non-European literature. Within Europe, though, the term of mobility windows seems to have first penetrated the national discourse in the mid-2000s. In these early days, it was most often linked to a particular development brought about by the Bologna Process: the new 2-tier and then 3-tier architecture of study programmes and degrees.

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), for example, recalls that the concept was first discussed in Germany at one of the DAAD's national conferences in 2005¹. One year earlier, in 2004, mobility windows had also been referenced in a document of the Conference of the Swiss University Rectors (CRUS). This document provided a mobility checklist for the development of new Bachelor's and Master's programmes in Switzerland (CRUS, 2004).

¹ Personal communication by Marina Steinmann, DAAD.

At the EU policy level, the former EU Commissioner for education, training, culture and youth, Jan Figel, touched upon the topic in an interview in 2008. He saw mobility windows as a “*remedy [...] for the overloaded study programmes*” created through the Bologna reforms – the programmes that, contrary to original expectations, did not have the desired effect of substantially raising student mobility.

More recently, the League of European Research Universities (LERU) has referred to mobility windows as part of a taxonomy of different mobility schemes. Based on several qualitative features (e.g. objectives of the programme, participation of students, impact on the curriculum, type of partnership required and managerial issues), three types of “mobility and collaboration” were identified:

- exchange mobility (individual mobility arrangements, e.g. under ERASMUS);
- networked mobility and curricula (“course packages and mobility paths” aligned between partners);
- embedded mobility and curricula (“international, multi-partner and multi-campus curricula with embedded mobility flows”, e.g. the Erasmus Mundus type of mobility) (De Moor & Henderikx, 2013, pp. 3, 9-14).

The term “mobility window” was specifically used to describe networked mobility, whereby mobility windows were found to be instrumental in aligning study offers and mobility opportunities in relation to the curricula of partner institutions (De Moor & Henderikx, 2013, p. 10).

Different types of curricular integration in the form of mobility windows were also explored in the context of the EU-funded project “*MOCCA – Model for Core Curricula with Integrated Mobility Abroad*” conducted by DAAD and several partner organisations in Europe. In this study, a mobility window was understood as a semester abroad (30 ECTS credits), supporting learning results that can be defined for (a) the whole semester, (b) one particular module or (c) six modules studied at a host institution (Steinmann, 2010).

In the literature, there seems to be an implicit consensus that mobility windows are form(s) of curricular integration of mobility. It also seems fairly clear for most stakeholders what place mobility windows should occupy. For example, the 2009 Communiqué of European Education Ministers stipulated the following:

“Within each of the three cycles, opportunities for mobility shall be created in the structure of degree programmes. Joint degrees and programmes as well as mobility windows shall become more common practice.” (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009, 4).

Currently, there is no clear and commonly accepted definition of mobility windows that would provide insight into the fundamental characteristics of mobility windows and allow users to further differentiate between various types of mobility windows.

2.1.2 Integrated study abroad programmes

As mentioned above, mobility windows are largely associated with the curricular integration of mobility and therefore come close to study abroad programmes. The latter, unlike the term mobility windows, have existed for several decades.

In the United States, the first modern study abroad programme was recorded as early as 1923, when the then Delaware College sent a group of eight students to France for their junior year (Walton, 2009, p. 62). By 1966, the number of “junior year abroad” programmes organised by American universities to Europe was found to have risen to 40 in France and 25 in Germany.

In the European context, organised study abroad programmes have been implemented since the mid-1970s; there are only few earlier exceptions (Burn et al., 1990). The European programmes and mobility schemes made student mobility an integrated part of study at the undergraduate level. Before, periods abroad had been organised on a private and individual basis. The integration of study abroad experience in the curriculum increased the importance of mechanisms of credit recognition and exchange of information on studies between institutions (de Wit, 2002, pp. 48, 65-66; van der Wende, 1996, p. 12).

Some scholars have articulated definitions of integrated study abroad programmes. In Europe, organised study abroad programmes have been described already more than twenty years ago as *“arrangements negotiated between higher education institutions (or individual faculties/departments) in different countries, whereby students are given the opportunity of spending a significant part of their higher education studies in another country”* (Burn et al., 1990, p. 11).

Teichler & Steube (1991) discuss the characteristics of a study abroad programme in contrast to “free moving” (individual mobility outside mobility programmes). They suggest defining study abroad programmes by the following characteristics:

- mobility is organised and negotiated (not ad-hoc);
- possibilities for mobility are offered regularly (not occasionally); and
- study abroad should be at least partially recognised in the study programme at home.

Similarly, in the North-American context, the integration of study abroad into the curriculum currently *“refers to a variety of institutional approaches designed to fully integrate study abroad options into the college experience and academic curricula for students”* (Brewer & Cunningham, 2009, xii).

The integration of mobility into study programmes has also been understood to cover a variety of aspects (Burn et al., 1990, p. 47):

- the degree of collaboration between partner institutions (in their administrative, financial and academic planning functions) in order to set up and maintain the study abroad programme;
- the degree to which study or internships abroad are recognised at home through the provision of credit points or otherwise, i.e. the extent to which they count towards the student’s degree;
- the degree to which study abroad phases are “interchangeable” parts of the curricula at the partner institutions;
- the immersion of students into the host country’s academic and social culture; and
- support given in the host institution both academically and socially (e.g. integration with domestic students).

The literature review shows that the wider concept of study abroad programmes accommodates a variety of approaches and institutional practices.

For example, one can distinguish between programmes with mandatory international mobility experience for all students (although some flexibility is still possible in the sense that students can choose a host institution) and programmes with optional mobility periods (e.g. Rivza & Teichler, 2007).

Furthermore, organised study abroad programmes can be either unilateral or reciprocal. Unilateral programmes only support a one-way movement of students from the home to the receiving institution, while reciprocal programmes facilitate student mobility in both directions either in the form of a bilateral partnership or a multi-partner consortium².

The web search conducted in the course of this project revealed further that such programmes can be either discipline-specific or constructed for students from various fields of study. Traditionally, study abroad programmes have covered language and area studies mainly, while in recent decades steps have been taken to introduce cross-disciplinary approaches that are either taught in class or organised as out-of-class study projects (e.g. Knight, 1994, p. 7).

² For further information on multilateral mobility schemes see van der Wende (1996, p. 12).

In the US, study abroad programmes often tend to be cross-disciplinary, given that study abroad has been traditionally viewed as part of general education (particularly in liberal arts colleges), rather than a stage meant to bring further specialisation of students in a particular area (Brewer & Cunningham, 2009). In the European context, one recent example of this sort is the joint degrees developed in the context of the Erasmus Mundus Programme.

Students can go abroad for study, for practical training in a foreign company (internship or placement), for research (e.g. for working on a Master's or PhD thesis), for a language course or for a summer/winter school (e.g. Cushner & Karim, 2004, p. 289). As the purpose of mobility varies, so does the duration of organised study abroad programmes, not only between institutions, but also within the same institution. Durations of study-related periods abroad can range from a few weeks to one academic year.

The existing studies point out that incoming students can participate in courses specifically designed for foreign students (e.g. Brewer & Cunningham, 2009). However, the more common model nowadays is to have study abroad students study in mixed classes with both domestic and foreign students. These mixed classes might be offered by partner institutions or by the sending institution's own study centers. These classes can also be open to domestic or foreign students from other institutions.

With regard to the certification of study abroad experience, different models have developed over time. In most European countries, study abroad periods are, by now, at least certified in the diploma supplement. One step further in the certification of study abroad has been the development of double and then joint degrees³. The graduates of joint programmes receive a diploma issued jointly by the two (or more) awarding institutions, while graduates of double degree programmes receive two separate degrees, one from each awarding institution (Schüle, 2006), with or without additional requirements (on the amount of time the student needs to spend in each institution). Recent studies also report a fast growth in the number of double and joint degree programmes in recent years, especially at the Master's level (Obst & Kuder, 2009).

³ The difference between double and joint degrees lies nevertheless largely in the different approaches to certifying credits, rather than in the different designs of these two programme types (Wächter, 2012, p. 24). Both types stand for "a collaborative degree program [...] that is offered by two or more institutions in different countries and feature a jointly developed and integrated curriculum, as well as a clear arrangement on credit recognition" (Obst & Kuder, 2012).

2.2 Definition of mobility windows

As elaborated in the literature review, the idea of a mobility window has been widely used in the European policy discourse over the last years. However, despite a frequent use of the term in practice, no shared understanding of the notion has emerged in the literature. While the term is a European invention, mobility windows can be regarded as closest analogue to integrated study programmes developed in the US several decades ago.

In Europe, the concept of mobility windows is still rather blurred. The lack of scientific and political consensus about the definition of mobility windows has therefore created a need for delineating the borders of this phenomenon.

In this study, *a mobility window is defined as a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study programme* (see Box 1). Instead of defining a mobility window with reference to how it works in practice or from the perspective of the students involved, the proposed definition thus focuses on *embeddedness into the study programme* as the criterion differentiating mobility windows from other paths to international mobility.

Embeddedness into the curriculum is defined by two criteria:

- 1) The foreseen mobility period is an explicit part of the home curriculum and the study plan. By looking at these documents, students should be able to identify the mobility window as an individual component of the study programme. The curriculum and study plan detail at which point in the programme students have to, should or can go abroad. Also, the duration of the mobility window is described.
- 2) The possibility and procedures of recognition are transparent. Students have to know before embarking upon their mobility experience under which conditions they will be granted recognition of their period abroad. The experience made in the context of a mobility window – or at least part of it – is certified. Usually, the courses completed during the mobility window period are recognised in the form of ECTS credits and thus help students in gathering the amount of credits required for the completion of their degree⁴.

⁴ Rarely, the experience made during a mobility window is not recognised through credits counting towards the degree. Such cases are also regarded as a mobility window following the argument that educational mobility has a value independent of whether it helps students to move closer to degree completion. However, what distinguishes a mobility window from other forms of international mobility is that it is still certified, either through ECTS credits being mentioned in the diploma supplement of a degree or through another, non-ECTS based document attesting the experience students have made.

Box 1: Definition and further explanation of the term “mobility window”

A mobility window is a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study programme.

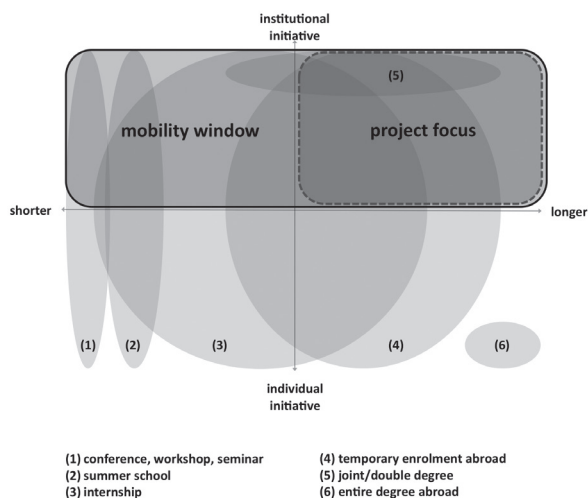
- Curricular embeddedness is defined by two criteria:
 - Firstly, the foreseen mobility period is an explicit part of the home curriculum and study plan. The latter detail at which point in the programme students have to, should or can go abroad and for how long.
 - Secondly, the home curriculum and study plan create transparency about the possibility of recognising the stay abroad. (A part of) the experience made during the mobility window counts towards or supplements the degree.
- The type of student mobility facilitated by a mobility window is physical and beyond national borders.
- A mobility window is shorter than the degree it is embedded into.

A mobility window facilitates the physical mobility of students across national borders. An opportunity for virtual mobility – as practiced when distance learning courses are followed at an institution abroad – is not considered a mobility window.

Moreover, a mobility window is understood to have a shorter duration than the degree into which it is embedded. It is thus a means of fostering credit mobility, which is conceptually differentiated from degree mobility. Credit mobility describes temporary stays abroad after which students return to their home institution or move on to a third institution for finishing their studies. Degree mobile students, in contrast, *“study the entire degree programme at an institution in a country other than the one where they obtained their school-leaving certificate”* (Kelo et al., 2006, p. 4).

Outgoing degree mobility is – in most countries – primarily contingent on an individual’s initiative to find a study place abroad. Boosting degree mobility requires policies on the (macro) level of regions, nations or supra-national entities, and typically not at the level of higher education institutions. The main purpose of mobility windows, in contrast, is to ease student mobility through some degree of institutional support – particularly for those individuals not taking the initiative on their own. Mobility windows are thus measures to support mobility at the (meso) levels of individual study programmes or higher education institutions.

Figure 1: The place of mobility windows in the international mobility spectrum and the focus of the project



Mobility windows are different from non-institutionalised forms of mobility (such as degree mobility). But how are they different from other types of mobility arrangements that are also, at least to some extent, supported by the institutions? As argued above, the distinguishing trait of mobility windows is their *curricular embeddedness*. As a result, mobility windows go beyond the standard arrangements found, for example, in the ERASMUS Programme. This does not mean that the developed definition categorically excludes ERASMUS mobility. However, meeting the minimum requirements for ERASMUS does not automatically qualify a study programme as one with a mobility window. The windows necessitate a higher degree of integration and structure compared to the typical ERASMUS mobility experience.

Mobility windows can support different types of activities abroad (see Fig. 1). In order to qualify as a mobility window, such an activity has to be at least partly institutionally initiated and supported. The vertical axis in Fig. 1 represents this dimension. All activities except pursuing an entire degree in a foreign country can potentially be integrated into a mobility window. Mobility windows can facilitate student participation in short activities, such as conferences or summer schools abroad (marked as (1) in Fig. 1), or longer periods of mobility, e.g. in the context of double degree programmes ((5) in Fig. 1). Nevertheless, as explained in section 1.3, the project focused on mobility windows with a minimum duration of three months (or the equivalent of 15 ECTS credits). The remainder of this publication therefore concentrates on (longer) mobility windows facilitating internships or study abroad as well as double and joint degrees.

3. Types of mobility windows

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3.1 Generating a typology

As highlighted in the introductory chapter, the second main objective of this study, after articulating a clear(er) definition of mobility windows, was to further differentiate between main window types. All this with the same overarching aim – that of facilitating a more rational discourse about mobility windows and their variety in the European context. In order to achieve this, we constructed a typology of mobility windows. This typology was generated by crossing a number of different attributes (called *fundamenta divisionis*) of the to-be-classified object – in our case, of mobility windows.

Before deciding which attributes of mobility windows should be crossed in order to generate a suitable typology, we identified and examined a comprehensive list of such characteristics. Some of them were more closely related to the *structure and the curriculum* of the study programme in which mobility windows are integrated, such as

- the *status of the window* in the study programme, differentiating between mandatory windows and optional windows; or
- the *degree of curricular standardisation* of the mobility experience facilitated through the window, making a distinction between cases with completely-prescribed vs. non-prescribed content.

Another characteristic we considered was related to the *actual types of programmes* that incorporate mobility windows, namely *traditional programmes* ('one institution – one degree' programmes) on the one hand, and *joint programmes* ('several institutions – joint/double degree' programmes) on the other.

A third, and last, set of characteristics concerned the *planning and organisation* of the mobility experience facilitated by the window, such as

- the *purpose of international mobility*, differentiating between mobility for study, internship, or for other activities (research projects, language courses, summer schools, etc.);
- the *duration* of the period spent abroad, spanning from very short stays to rather long stays abroad; and

- the *number of foreign partners* (from the programme's perspective) or the *number of potential destinations abroad* (from students' point of view) distinguishing between one destination for mobility vs. several destinations for mobility.

From amongst these attributes, we made a selection of the most relevant characteristics. Given that one of the driving questions of our study was of *how mobility windows are integrated into the structure of study programmes* we decided to keep as *fundamenta divisionis* only those attributes that were related to the curricular integration of windows¹. This is in line with our view that the curricular integration (or 'embeddedness') of windows is what most differentiates mobility windows from other types of mobility arrangements (see also section 2.2).

The following two dimensions were therefore selected and then crossed to generate the typology:

- the *status of the window* within the study programme, which can be either mandatory or optional; and
- the *degree of standardisation of the academic content* (curriculum/courses/tasks) taken during the mobility window, differentiating between windows with highly-prescribed content on the one hand and with loosely-prescribed content on the other.

Box 2: Typology dimensions

Dimensions crossed to generate the typology

- the status of the window in the study programme: mandatory vs. optional; and
- the degree of standardisation of the window's content: highly-prescribed vs. loosely-prescribed.

Characteristic number 1 – status of the window within the study programme – differentiates between two different situations.

First, when a window is a mandatory component of the programme, it is a *sine qua non* element of the programme (Fig. 2). A mandatory window involves that *all students* in the respective programme *have to* go abroad 'through'

¹ Naturally, if other characteristics had been taken into account, we would have arrived at a very different typology. Clearly, depending on the researchers' interests, different typologies of mobility windows are possible.

the window. In such cases, the students are generally aware from the start of the programme (the time of enrollment), the existence of the window and the ensuing ‘obligation’ of mobility.

Figure 2: Example of a three-year Bachelor’s programme with a mandatory mobility window

Semester 1 at “home”	Semester 2 at “home”	Semester 3 at “home”	Semester 4 Mobility window	Semester 5 at “home”	Semester 6 at “home”
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Second, when the window is *optional* in the study programme, it means that it constitutes a potential, often parallel track in the programme, as can be seen in Fig. 4. Students in programmes with optional mobility windows can choose to take the ‘window path’, but *need not to*. Generally, such students have to decide at a later stage during their studies if they want to follow the ‘mobility route’ or not. At this point students can choose to simply stay at their home institution (route 1) or to go abroad using the window (route 2).

Figure 3: Example of a three-year Bachelor’s programme with optional mobility window

Semester 1 at “home”	Semester 2 at “home”	Semester 3 at “home”	Semester 4 at “home” (route 1) Semester 4 Mobility window (route 2)	Semester 5 at “home”	Semester 6 at “home”
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Characteristic number 2 – the *degree of standardisation of content* (curriculum/courses/tasks) – captures the extent to which the curriculum corresponding to the mobility window period is pre-arranged. Here we distinguish between two situations: one in which the courses/content to be taken abroad during the mobility window are almost fully pre-set, i.e. a window with *highly-prescribed* content on the one hand, and one with only partly pre-set content – the *loosely-prescribed* windows – on the other hand.

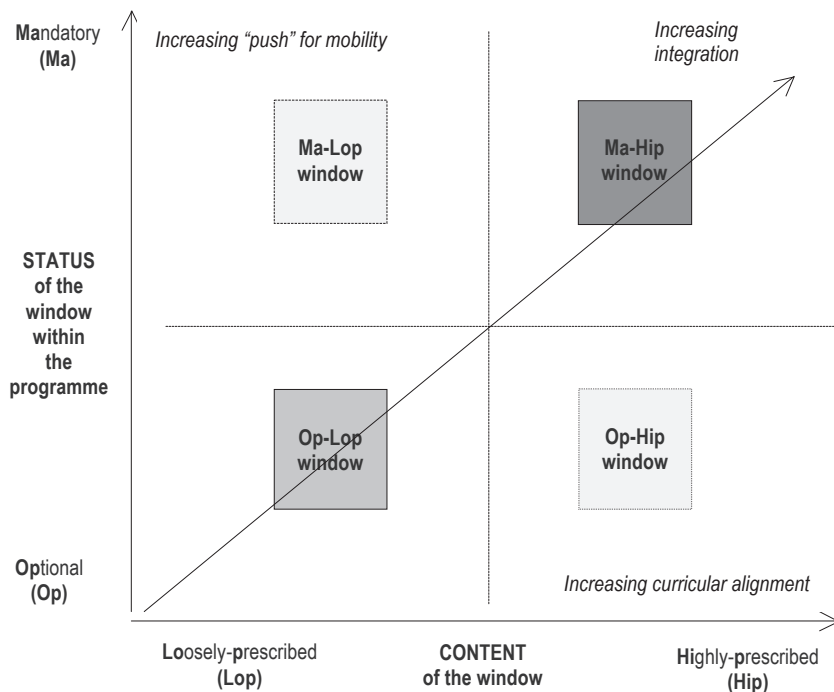
In windows where the content is *highly-prescribed*, students have a very limited choice, if any, over what they can study (or do, in the case of internships) when abroad. In such cases, for example, almost all courses that students take abroad have been decided already, in general by the home and host institution together. The mobile student is at best allowed to choose one or

two optional courses in addition to the already mandatory ones. In cases with *loosely-prescribed* content, students have a much wider choice than in the opposite case. These choices may, however, still be made from a pre-defined list of courses that are offered by the partner institution.

3.2 A typology of mobility windows

By crossing these two main characteristics, each with its two polar values, we arrived at the proposed typology of mobility windows. The *typology incorporates four main types*, as seen in Fig. 4, and meets two vital conditions: the types are “mutually exclusive” (they do not overlap) and are “jointly exhaustive” (together, they cover the whole spectrum of this phenomenon) (Marradi, 1990).

The typology reflects different degrees of integration into study programmes of mobility windows (see the horizontal axis). Closest to the centre is the most flexible type of windows (we refer to this type as an **Op-Lop**), i.e. optional windows with loosely-prescribed content. This type comes closest to most other types of organised mobility, like those facilitated by the ERASMUS Programme. At the other end of the spectrum we find the most structured type, the **Ma-Hip**, namely mandatory mobility windows with highly-prescribed content. Between these two are two hybrid types of windows – the **Ma-Lop** and the **Op-Hip** – which combine both more flexible and more rigid elements. While the **Ma-Lops** stand for mandatory windows with loosely-prescribed content, the **Op-Hips** represent optional windows with highly-prescribed content. These hybrid types reflect similar degrees of integration, standing, from this point of view, between the **Ma-Hip** and the **Op-Lop** windows.

Figure 4: Typology of mobility windows

Furthermore, table 1 summarises the main characteristics of the four types².

Table 1: Main characteristics of the four mobility window types

Ma-Lop windows • are a hybrid type of mobility window, combining flexible and more rigid elements; • the window is a <i>mandatory</i> component of the study programme; and • what students study or undertake while abroad is <i>loosely-prescribed</i>.	Ma-Hip windows • are the most structured type of mobility window; • the window is a <i>mandatory</i> component of the study programme; and • students have very limited choice, if any, over what to study/do when abroad – the academic content of the window is <i>highly-prescribed</i>.
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² Examples of the four main types are given in the next section.

Op-Lop windows • are the most flexible type of mobility window (coming very close to ERASMUS mobility); • the window is an <i>optional</i> part of the study programme (the mobility window route); and • what students study or undertake while abroad is <i>loosely-prescribed</i>.	Op-Hip windows • are a hybrid type of mobility windows, combining flexible and more rigid elements; • the window is an <i>optional</i> part of the study programme (the mobility window route); and • students have very limited choice, if any, over what to study/do when abroad – the academic content of the window is <i>highly-prescribed</i>.
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It should be noted that the four types refer to the integration of mobility windows into a study programme *only*. As a result, they each allow for internal variation across other characteristics, such as the number of destinations/foreign partners, the purpose and the length of mobility, and so on.

3.3 Main types in real life – integration of windows into study programmes

3.3.1 Mobility windows covered in the sample

In the framework of the study we covered 32 study programmes incorporating a total number of 42 mobility windows that fit in one of the four main types.

With regards to the *frequency* of these four types in practice, it is rather difficult to draw wider conclusions about this phenomenon, given that our sample is rather small and not fully representative. We can, however, outline some observations concerning the cases we did cover in the study³.

³ When trying to classify the windows we examined into one of the four main types, we were confronted with some additional choices. For example, we chose to classify windows in double degree programmes in which the students can choose the international, double degree track later during their studies as Op-Hips, according to our typology. We chose this option although from the moment a student decides to follow the window track the latter becomes mandatory, resembling very much the Ma-Hip type. We consider these cases as Op-Hip examples in our study because we made a clear distinction between those programmes that only exist as a double degree programme, which normally incorporate Ma-Hip windows, and those programmes that allow for a double degree track for some of their students, which as our cases show rather incorporate Op-Hip windows.

Amongst these, the *Op-Lop* windows are the most frequent type (see table 2 below) – almost half of the researched study programmes had at least one such window in place. While interesting, we do not find this observation very surprising, given that this type generally requires less institutional planning than the more structured windows, and as a result fewer resources spent by the institution/programme.

The second most frequent type in our sample are the *Op-Hip* windows, which has been found in more than a third of the researched programmes.

Table 2: Mobility windows found in the 32 study programmes classified by type (see Annex II for detailed names)

Dimensions		2. Degree of standardisation of window's (academic) content	
		Loosely-prescribed (Lop)	Highly-prescribed (Hip)
		<u>Ma-Lop</u>	<u>Ma-Hip</u>
1. Status of the window in the study programme	Mandatory (Ma)	5a ⁴ , 11a, 11b, 14, 16, 29a	7, 8, 15a, 17, 24, 26a, 27a, 28a
		<u>Op-Lop</u>	<u>Op-Hip</u>
	Optional (Op)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5b, 6, 9, 10, 15b, 23, 25, 26b, 27c, 28c, 29b, 29c	12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 27b, 28b, 30, 31, 32

3.3.2 Activity supported by the mobility window

One important distinction not directly related to the degree of embeddedness of mobility windows, but still very relevant when discussing curricular integra-

⁴ The numbers in the table correspond to the numbers allocated to each of the 32 study programmes we covered in the study. A full list of programmes and their corresponding number can be found in Annex II. Additional letters appear next to the programme's number in cases where the respective programme embeds more than one mobility window. In such situations, the letter "a" marks the first window of the programme, while the letters "b" and "c" mark the second and third window respectively.

tion is the purpose of the mobility window within the programme. By purpose we mean the actual activity carried out abroad, making a distinction in our study between mobility for study purposes on the one hand, and mobility for practical training, i.e. internships or placements, on the other.

As can be seen in Table 3 below, the large majority of windows we covered in the study facilitate study abroad, rather than internships. Again, we were not surprised by this particular observation, despite the small size of our sample, that while many programmes require a mandatory internship period, very often this can and is actually done 'at home', and not necessarily abroad.

Table 3: Mobility windows found in the 32 study programmes classified by type and purpose of mobility

Dimensions			2. Degree of standardisation of window's (academic) content	
			Loosely-prescribed (Lop)	Highly-prescribed (Hip)
			<u>Ma-Lop</u>	<u>Ma-Hip</u>
1. Status of the window in the study programme	Mandatory (Ma)	For study	5a, 11a, 11b, 14, 16	7, 8, 15a, 17, 24, 26a, 27a, 28a
		For internship	29a	
		Mixed or either/or		
	Optional (Op)		<u>Op-Lop</u>	<u>Op-Hip</u>
		For study	5b, 6, 9, 10, 23, 25, 26b	12, 13, 19, 21, 27b, 28b, 31, 32
		For internship	27c, 28c	30
		Mixed or either/or	1, 2, 3, 4, 15b, 29b, 29c	18, 20, 22

As further apparent in Table 3, most of the windows in cases we analysed had one purpose, serving either internship or study. Only a limited number of windows showed a different reality. They either allowed students to combine study and internship in the same window (and at the same destination point) – ‘mixed’ cases – or allowed students to choose if they want to go abroad for *either* study or for internship purposes. In other words, while in the first example the purpose is already decided for the students by the programme coordinators, the latter allows for a customised approach, the students determining according to their interests the ultimate purpose of the window – study or internship.

We further observed, amongst the 42 windows, that the manner of combining study and internship in one window can vary greatly from one programme to another.

Some programmes opt for a ‘sequential’ approach, i.e. one activity follows the other. In such cases the internship either precedes (as most of our cases show) or immediately follows the study period at the partner institution. An example of the first model is the UNIBUC BA in Social Work programme – number 18 in the table, where students start with an internship and then continue with their studies at the Danish partner institution – the Via University College. We further found examples where the internship is neither the predecessor nor the successor of the study period, but rather an ‘intermission’ during the latter. One such case is the UTCB MSc in Civil Eng. programme – number 22 in the above table – where students first start by studying at the partner university in France, the University of Poitiers, then continue with an internship there (for either three or ten months) and then finalise their studies in France.

Other programmes opt for a parallel or ‘total overlap’ approach, in which, as the word suggests, the internship abroad is carried out at the same time as the study period at the partner institution.

Last, few of the programmes in the sample opted for a ‘partial overlap’ model. Such an example is the Vechta Bachelor Brazil programme – number 3 in the table – in which part of the internship period is in parallel with the study abroad activity, while the remaining part follows the study abroad period.

Clearly, what students learn or gain through a window for internships abroad is practical experience in a different, i.e. international context. But what do students learn through mobility windows for study? According to the examples we examined in the study, mobility windows for study facilitate two different kinds of academic learning experiences. Through such windows the students are either offered the opportunity to learn something very similar to what they would have learned at home or rather the opposite – something completely different. In the first case, the windows are most often in the “Hip”

category, i.e. with the highly-prescribed content, as they require close negotiations between and alignment of the curricula of the partner programmes. In the latter case, the windows most often fall in the “Lop” group, i.e. loosely-prescribed, and allow students to gain a complementary specialisation or a ‘minor’ abroad. As we will further see in chapter 6, these two very different practices require different degrees of curricular adaptation and integration, as well as different recognition procedures.

3.3.3 Types of study programmes with mobility windows

According to our sample of programmes, mobility windows can be part of *traditional study programmes* – i.e. programmes resulting in one single degree – as well as of *joint or double degree programmes*, i.e. programmes resulting from the collaboration of at least two awarding higher education institutions or programmes located in different countries. The latter type of programmes ends either with the award of two degrees (in the case of double degrees) or of one degree, jointly awarded by the partner institutions. Fourteen of the programmes we looked at were either double or joint degrees programmes, while the rest (18) awarded traditional degrees.

For the traditional degree programmes we covered in the study, the incorporation of mobility windows seems a choice rather than a must, while in the programmes in more internationally-oriented fields, such as area studies or international business, mobility windows seem to be almost a ‘must’. In the latter cases the window is many times seen, as chapter 4 will further show, as a natural way to further enhance the programme’s existing regional or international focus. In contrast, for all double or joint degrees we covered in the study, the mobility window is an essential element. It is within the very nature of such programmes to facilitate organised mobility between at least two partner institutions, located in different countries. It would be hard if not impossible to imagine an international joint programme without a mobility window component.

3.3.4 Number of windows per programme

Given the difference between the number of programmes and the number of windows we covered in the study – 32 to 42 – it is quite clear that one single study programme can have more than one mobility window, although this was not extremely frequent amongst the cases we examined. The majority of programmes we covered in the study, namely 25, contain only one mobility window⁵.

⁵ In some cases the number of windows in a programme was not immediately apparent. For example, in three of the Romanian double degree programmes covered, students had to spend a longer period abroad (one or more years). The period abroad was often split into two parts: a part →

Amongst our 25 *one-window programmes*, the window is more often used for study than for internship purposes. We only came across one case that incorporates a single window for practical training. This is the UCU in Africa window, number 30 in Table 3, which facilitates a mix of field trips in Africa and an internship at a locally-based NGO.

Concerning the *multiple-window programmes*, our sample covers four programmes with two mobility windows and three programmes with three windows. The multiple windows can either be of the same type, as is for example the case for the Ca'Foscari Bsc in Economics and Management, which incorporates two Ma-Lop windows for study, one to the US and the other to France, or of different types. Especially in double or joint degree programmes, it does not seem uncommon to have one window of the most structured Ma-Hip type, generally for studies, accompanied by another/other optional window(s) – of either the Op-Hip or Op-Lop types. Such an example is the Groningen EM MSc CEMACUBE (Biomed. Eng.) programme, which incorporates one Ma-Hip window (27a) for study, followed by an Op-Hip (27b) for study and an Op-Lop (27c) for internships. Many of the Op-Lop windows covered in the study were actually the second or third window in a multiple-window programme, generally following a mandatory window.

A very interesting multiple-window example is also the Saxion BBA Tourism Management programme, which incorporates the only Ma-Hip window for internships amongst the cases in our sample, followed by two Op-Lops – one mixed (for studies or internships abroad) and one for study (research and thesis) abroad.

The present chapter concludes the more conceptual and, thus, more abstract part of the publication. This part provided a clear account of the thinking and the overall process of generating the typology of mobility windows. It introduced the four main types and their main characteristics, as well as a set of 'real life' examples observed during the project's field stage. Part 2 of the publication will give further insights into the actual functioning of mobility windows, starting from the rationales for creating mobility windows, continuing with the preliminary stages – the set-up of windows – and moving on to organisational aspects, to then conclude with observations on the evaluation stage of mobility windows.

for studies (in all cases of the Ma-Hip type) and one for practical training (either of the Ma-Lop or the Op-Hip type). We have decided to count these in the study as one mixed purpose window, as the programme coordinators regarded this period as one single window and not two separate ones.

Part 2. Mobility windows in action: functioning, typical challenges and observed solutions

4. Why mobility windows? Rationales at the study programme and the institution level

Irma Garam

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The idea of mobility windows gained current in European discussions based on the hope that windows would be helpful in removing barriers to the international mobility of students in higher education and thus help increase mobility numbers. As mentioned earlier, these barriers include the poor recognition of studies abroad and the extension of the duration of studies because of experience abroad. In the European policy discourse, increasing international student mobility is an important goal because mobility supposedly enhances the quality of education and research, strengthens the overall internationalisation in European higher education, enhances students' personal development and employability, fosters the capacity to deal with other cultures and encourages linguistic pluralism (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009).

So why do institutions and study programmes develop such integrated mobility arrangements? How do institutions justify the integration of mobility windows into the curricula of their study programmes? Looking at the empirical material gathered through the site visits, it is possible to sum up nine rationales that were mentioned by the visited institutions and programmes with mobility windows. Overall, the rationales mentioned by the interviewees show that programmes and institutions develop mobility windows because they expect them to be beneficial for all parties involved – students, the study programme(s) in question and the institution as a whole.

Based on our research, coordinators of programmes with mobility windows do not seem to have had different rationales for building such mechanisms compared to rationales usually associated with other types of mobility arrangements. In fact, most of the rationales mentioned refer to student mobility at a more general level and not specifically to mobility windows as such. Furthermore, none of the nine rationales seemed to be exclusive to only one particular type of mobility window of the four types identified in chapter 3.

4.1 Institution- and programme-focused rationales

Some of the rationales for developing mobility windows reported by the programme coordinators were related to the direct benefits for the study programme and institution.

Developing closer cooperation with partners

Developing structured mobility arrangements is seen as one way of building closer and more established cooperation with partner institutions. It offers a means to benchmark tuition and the curriculum in reference to other institutions. This rationale can be found mainly in cases where the content of the mobility window is planned together with a limited number of selected partner institutions (generally Ma-Hip and Op-Hip windows).

Developing the quality of the study programme

This rationale focuses on the programme itself and not necessarily on the students' needs. In programmes following this rationale, mobility windows were built because they were perceived 'good' for the programme. In addition, they were considered to provide a possibility to share expertise and knowledge between similar kinds of programmes and institutions in different countries, which is seen to result in enhancing the quality of the educational offer of the 'home' programme

Enhancing overall internationalisation

In this case, mobility windows were justified by stressing the fact that they serve the overall purpose of internationalisation of the study programme and institution. Student mobility is one of the key elements of internationalisation. Supporting mobility was often perceived to help stimulate other forms of international cooperation as well, such as staff visits, international benchmarking and joint (research) projects.

International character of subject field

The implementation of a mobility window was also justified by the interviewed programme coordinators by referring to the international character of the subject field or industry. This suggests that internationalisation, international mobility and mobility windows are a natural, almost unquestionable, part of the programme. During the site visits, the international character of the subject field as a driver for implementing a mobility window was named mainly by programme managers in the fields of business, tourism and area studies.

Integrated mobility as an inherent element of joint programmes

Many mobility windows observed in the site visits are integrated into study programmes leading to a joint or double degree. Concerning these programmes, it is difficult to distinguish rationales for developing the mobility window from rationales for developing joint or double degree programmes as such. Structured mobility arrangements were developed because they are an integral part of developing joint or double degree programmes. Accordingly, this rationale was mentioned most frequently by programmes with highly-prescribed content of mobility windows (Ma-Hips and Op-Hips).

4.2 Student-focused rationales

A second set of rationales is related to the perceived benefits for the students who go abroad through mobility windows.

Providing better education possibilities for students

Students are at the centre of this rationale. Integrated mobility arrangements were built into study programmes because they were believed to be good for students and to offer value added for their studies: broader and better learning possibilities, as well as alternative perspectives and opportunities for personal growth.

Enhancing students' employability

This rationale is very closely linked to the previous one and also focuses on students' needs. Mobility windows were justified by claiming that they could help students find their place in the labour market and that they could provide students with skills and experience useful for their future career. Enhancing student employability as a rationale for mobility windows cannot be totally separated from the rationale of providing better education for students. Broader learning possibilities in different countries are connected to students' professional development and better chances for finding gainful employment in a globalised labour market.

4.3 Policy-focused rationales

A third set of rationales mentioned during the site visits is directly related to the policy discourse and objectives at the institutional, national and/or European level.

Implementing institutional/national/European policy

In some cases, building mobility windows was justified by referring to policy processes and objectives outside of the study programme. This rationale

presents a top-down approach, but also an understanding that actions at the programme level are often part of a larger picture. In such a case, integrated mobility arrangements are in line with the institution's strategy emphasising internationalisation. Some programme managers explicitly referred to European level policy by stating that integrated mobility arrangements were supposed to implement the aims of the Bologna process.

Increasing student mobility

By developing more structured mobility arrangements, institutions may aim to increase the overall numbers of internationally-mobile students and the number of students going to some specific partner institutions or countries. Also, they may try to balance the number of incoming and outgoing students. Increasing student mobility numbers is an explicit objective in European policy as well as in many national and institutional policies. Developing integrated mobility arrangements in study programmes is one way to respond to this policy objective. This rationale was however not that frequently mentioned in the interviews with programme coordinators compared to the other ones.

5. Setting-up mobility windows

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5.1 Initiating and supporting mobility windows

Mobility window arrangements are not created in a vacuum. There are conditions supporting them and conditions preventing them at the institutional, national and European level. Somebody has to take the initiative and somebody has to do the work to keep them running. Building mobility windows into the curriculum also requires support from different actors. This chapter examines how mobility windows are initiated and supported at their early phase from an intra- and extra-institutional perspective.

Bottom-up initiative for mobility windows

Who initiates mobility windows? Our data suggest that mobility windows are often the result of bottom-up initiatives. In most cases, the initiative came from the academic staff¹. Sometimes mobility windows were initiated by academics in partner institutions or jointly by a group of academics in different partner institutions. In many cases faculty deans, or other staff members at the faculty level, were also active in initiating integrated mobility arrangements. Therefore, it seems to be important for the development of the window that there is somebody at the 'grass root' level at an institution who would be interested in launching the mobility window and taking the responsibility for building it. Since mobility windows are embedded in the structure of the curriculum, it is also important that these people are in a position to make changes to the curriculum in order to introduce a mobility window.

In some cases, the initiative for installing a window is taken by the partner institution, the international office of the institution, or even the government which approaches the institution with incentives.

Although mobility windows are commonly initiated at a grass roots level, we also encountered a few (rare) cases where the initiative came from the top.

¹ In our data it is not always specified who the academic staff is - professors, lecturers or programme directors – but the term refers to people working with the content and structures of a particular study programme.

For example, in the case of the LUISS MSc in Management – Fudan programme, the first contact between the partner institutions was established by the governments of the two countries involved (Italy and China), which shared the aim of fostering internationalisation of their respective higher education systems.

Support for mobility windows – top-down approach

Despite the fact that the initiative for mobility windows often comes from the grass root level of the institution, support coming from the top can also be very important.

Institutional support

The central administration of the institution was frequently named by many interviewees when talking about the initiative to launch a mobility window. In most cases, support from the institution refers to institutional strategies and objectives emphasising the goals of internationalisation which provided a generally conducive environment to the initiative. It could also refer to the overall acceptance and the recognition of the mobility window by the central administration or management. In some individual cases, institutional funding provided to the window initiative was mentioned in this respect.

Support at the national level

The initiative to build a mobility window can also be supported at the national level, usually by the national office (for international exchange) or other related government agencies. The support at the national level can take the form of funding, or framework conditions, such as the national strategy or policy favouring international mobility and internationalisation. All these forms of support provided at the national level were mentioned by the interviewees.

Support at the European level

Support may also come from the European level. European policy processes and objectives with regard to increasing student mobility can either motivate or even pressure institutions to develop mobility windows. This was recognised by some interviewees who referred to the Bologna Process and the European policy provisions as a background or a push for developing a mobility window. Some interviewees also reported to have received EU funding for collaboration with partners or for building a joint programme.

The importance of multi-level cooperation

Both bottom-up and top-down approaches to initiating mobility windows have their weaknesses. On the one hand, with a bottom-up approach, it can

be difficult to ensure the sustainability of a window which is driven by an enthusiastic academic without being supported by the institution. On the other hand, with a top-down approach, the central administration of the institution may encounter difficulties in installing a window unless the change process is supported by those who actually work on the curriculum and with the students. Therefore, both approaches are needed for the successful installation of a window.

The above said has clearly been echoed by our empirical data. Many interviewees reported to have been actively involved at the programme or faculty level, but at the same time they felt the need to look for support at the institutional, national or European level. Many also referred to the importance of a strong cooperation between different actors within the institution: the international office, faculty members, and management. The value of cooperation between different levels of the institution was particularly highlighted by the study programmes with optional mobility windows (Op-Lops and Op-Hips).

Opportunities for building a mobility window

Reforms of the study programme or the degree structure can create room for introducing structured mobility arrangements into the curriculum. Some of our site visit interviewees reported to have seized the opportunity, which arose in the context of the curriculum reforms, such as the introduction of a Bachelor's and Master's degree architecture or the re-design of the study programme's curriculum, to introduce a structured mobility phase into a curriculum. Therefore, it is important that international student mobility is not forgotten in the curriculum development work. Another programme representative reported however that the new Bologna degree architecture has actually made the cooperation with the partner institution more difficult, as it required finding another model for the mobility window, which was already functioning very well in the pre-Bologna stage.

Integrated mobility as an integral part of a joint or double degree

Joint and double degree programmes form a special case in terms of building a mobility window. These programmes by definition require to have integrated mobility periods; therefore, planning mobility windows is an integral part of the process of designing a joint/double degree curriculum which cannot be separated from the overall curriculum development process.

Support is mainly immaterial

The interviewees reported receiving substantial support from different actors for building mobility windows. However, in most cases support was of an immaterial nature, for example, in the form of a strategic framework promot-

ing international mobility or simply the acceptance of the initiative. Receiving funding for the building of the mobility window was reported only in some (rare) cases (see section 5.6). And even in these cases, the interviewees often stated that the funding obtained was rather modest.

5.2 Establishing and maintaining partnerships for mobility windows

Once the decision to integrate a mobility window into a study programme has been taken, a foreign partner institution is needed. Cooperation between institutions or study programmes in the form of formalised mobility windows can be the result of a shared history of cooperation between the institution or its members.

Many of the partnerships behind the mobility windows visited during the site visits had in fact evolved from previous cooperation. This fits well with the observation that the initiative for implementing a mobility window often lies with the academic staff (see section 5.1). Often, professors or academic staff had been involved in joint research projects with their counterparts from the partner institution. Other contacts had been formed on the basis of staff or (less formal) student exchange. Some cases had developed out of previous institutional cooperation: for example, the UTCB in Romania and the French *Ecole Nationale des Ponts* have been cooperating in the framework of Tem-pus projects since the early 1990s, before they launched the double degree programme (UTCB MSc in Civil Eng.) in the late 1990s. Similarly, supported by the German Association for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Hannover Bachelor Plus+ China programme had established a cooperation with its Chinese partner, which later paved the way to a reciprocal strategic partnership between *Hochschule Hannover* (HsH) and the Zhejiang University of Science and Technology (ZUST).

The decision to implement mobility windows in an institution's study programme(s) may also be taken without having specific partners in mind. In such instances, a dedicated search for appropriate potential partner institutions is necessary. These partners may be approached by senior management or other central offices of an institution, e.g. the international office, or by individual academics from the study programme concerned. Again, the formation of such new partnerships may draw on the personal networks of the academics to facilitate the communication between the institutions.

The cases we observed during our site visits that did deliberately search for new partners with whom no previous cooperation existed tended to be mandatory windows which offered a large number of possible destinations to their

students. Such windows were mainly built into programmes in which general international experience played a significant role (e.g. International Business). Programmes and institutions looking to establish new partnerships reported that they looked for interesting and compatible partners through a search on the internet, met institutional representatives at fairs, or asked academic staff to suggest potential partners based on their existing contacts. In one of the programmes, inspiration was drawn from free-moving students' choices of host institutions.

5.2.1 Criteria for choosing partners

While establishing contacts, the searching institution might already have an idea of what makes a partner attractive and suitable. The criteria for such a search, which are detailed below, are at the same time often the ones which were reported to make 'naturally evolved' partnerships successful by the programme coordinators.

Overall, however, the majority of interviewees stated that partner choice did not depend on just one criterion – finding an appropriate partner often relied on a combination of criteria. In only a few cases, however, were these criteria formalised, e.g. in the form of a checklist.

Curriculum

The potential partner institution's orientation with regard to the curriculum (content) is a key consideration for institutions looking for a partner with whom to jointly organise a mobility window. How similar or dissimilar should a partner's curriculum be to start such cooperation? We have observed different approaches: on the one hand, very similar courses facilitate credit recognition and continuity of content in the home curriculum. On the other hand, courses not taught at the home institution offer students the opportunity to broaden their horizons. The same holds true at the programme level: often, a specific research or professional orientation is (implicitly or explicitly) inherent in the entire study programme. The extent to which this orientation matches or complements the home institution's curriculum can have an impact on student learning and thus is taken into consideration by institutions looking for potential partners.

Of course, the question of compatibility between curricula is of greater importance for mobility windows which build their content on existing courses than for those which are jointly designed by two or more institutions from scratch. Even for the latter cases, the potential partner institution's course offer at the time of the partnership search can be taken as an indication of effective collaboration.

Regarding the match of the partner institution's curriculum, both approaches – similarity vs. diversity – were named by the interview partners. Some programmes emphasised the importance of complementing expertise that the partners brought to the cooperation:

“The idea was to get extended academic expertise to the Baltic Sea Region subject. Each university should be able to provide something special.”

Often, such an approach was found in programmes which offered a joint or double degree and had thus designed a common curriculum (as Ma-Hip or Op-Hip windows). But other types of mobility windows also mentioned this strategy, for example the UNICAM MSC Computer Science (Op-Lop). This programme considered the cooperation with partners as a possibility to offer students the chance to study subjects or topics that are not taught at UNICAM (e.g. Artificial Intelligence). A different Op-Lop-type window, however, highlighted the need for compatible content:

“The most important criterion is analogies of content taught in both participating institutions or programmes. While the exact content may be different, the overall orientations of the programmes have to match.”

Quality of research and teaching

Concerning the selection of mobility partners, the European Commission suggests taking into account the potential partner institution's standards of teaching. The reasoning behind this is that a general acknowledgement of a partner's (good) standard facilitates smooth recognition procedures. As the quality of teaching may be difficult to determine for an outsider, an institution's reputation in general and/or the quality of its research output often serve as proxies. Therefore, existing research collaborations may be seen as a good indicator not only of the compatibility of approaches, but also of the general standards at the potential partner institution. Other collaborative activities such as summer schools or lecturer exchanges can also provide insight into the teaching styles and standards of another institution.

The partner institution's standard of teaching and research was seldom explicitly named as a criterion in the interviews, but often implied in phrases such as “good partners”. An acceptance of the partner programme's standards is also implied in the evaluation of the relevance of the content offered and previous successful research cooperation. Some institutions, however, did report that they drew on international accreditations and rankings to identify potential partner institutions.

Geography

Geographical considerations can be important for several reasons. Sometimes, the reference to a specific country or region is inherent in the focus of a study programme, e.g. in the case of Asian or African Studies. Even without this obvious relationship, certain regions may provide specific research and learning opportunities for the subject of study which are not present in the home institution's country or region. This may be the case due to geographical characteristics – for example, a European student of marine biology gaining first-hand experience of tropical ecosystems – or cultural specificities – e.g. an archeology student spending time in a historically significant region.

Moreover, the geographical location of a potential partner institution may influence students' willingness to take part in the mobility window for reasons not directly related to their studies. Some regions and cities may be more attractive than others simply because of good climatic conditions or their general reputation as an attractive place to live. Cooperating with institutions in geographically distant, 'exotic' locations can be a means of distinguishing a study programme from the masses. Finally, the location of the partner university has implications for the logistics of student mobility in terms of costs for travel and living (see chapter 7).

Language

Closely related to questions of geography is the issue of language. Again, the importance of the language of the host country can be inherent in the focus of the study programme. The benefits of studying in a Spanish speaking environment are obvious for students enrolled in Romance studies. Some regions attract students of all disciplines by providing attractive learning opportunities for those hoping to learn or improve their skills in a widely spoken language such as English.

Besides offering potential benefits, a partner institution's and its country's requirements on language skills may also pose obstacles to a successful cooperation. For one, the institutions' members have to be able to communicate in a common language. For another, learning a previously unknown language up to a level that enables students to follow courses and seminars at a higher education institution is no small feat. Students may be reluctant to tackle this task, especially if the language in question is not widely-spoken and thus perceived to be of little future value. In order to circumvent the language barrier, the curricula of many mobility windows are taught in English, even if the host country's language is a different one. In such cases, the availability of English-taught courses at the partner institution becomes an important criterion.

In fact, the availability of English-taught courses was one of the criteria most often named by the interview partners. Several programme managers even considered it to be the most important one. As several interview partners pointed out, offering courses in English could also help and institution to become more attractive as a partner for foreign institutions.

5.2.2 Cooperating with partners

The interviewees reported that initiating the window typically required several meetings, regardless of the window's type. During the planning stage, meeting in person was regarded as especially important by the majority of the interview partners.

Even in an established mobility window, regulations may need to be adapted due to changes in national or institutional regulations, in the institutions' course offer, or any other matters. For this reason, maintaining regular contact with the partner institution or programme is necessary. The regularity of such contacts may depend on the degree of routinisation of the mobility window: cooperation in the early stages may require more coordination efforts compared to the already established windows that can run more or less smoothly. The amount of coordination requirements may also vary according to different phases of the study year, with particular issues arising only during exam period, for example. Close contacts with the partner institution or programme can help prevent problems as the arising issues may be identified early on and dealt with in a timely manner. Additionally, being aware of current developments at the partner institutions can facilitate the identification of opportunities to broaden the cooperation (e.g. to other areas of study, to research, to additional partners).

During the site visit interviews, the need for on-going and continuous communication between the partners was highlighted. Ongoing communications at the implementation stage, however, tended to be done through electronic means. Email communication was most frequently mentioned; some programmes reported making use of virtual work-sharing platforms or even a common electronic information system. Nevertheless, most programme coordinators still reported that additionally, personal contacts between the partners took place fairly regularly after the window had been set up, often once or twice a year.

Programme coordinators may also decide to implement activities specifically targeting a better coordination of the mobility window, e.g. (regular) meetings, or activities which additionally further cooperation beyond the mobility window, for example, summer schools. Kick-off meetings can be helpful in establishing first working relationships which can then be continued via other

means in cases where none of those responsible have met previously. Who to involve in these kinds of meetings generally depends on who is mainly responsible for the mobility window in the respective institutions.

Many interviewees stated that they met their partners at conferences, in the course of other ongoing (research) projects or on other occasions (e.g. summer schools, presentations, or alumni events). Some coordinators accompanied groups of mobile students travelling to the partner institution in order to use the chance to discuss the mobility windows with the partners and to take care of practical matters such as housing. The coordinator of the Vechta Bachelor Brazil programme (Op-Lop), for example, reported travelling to the partner institution in Brazil every year, using the opportunity to evaluate activities in the past academic year with his Brazilian colleagues and to find new partners for internship placements as well as host families for the students.

Generally, the importance of personal contacts was rated highly by the interviewees. In some cases, coordinators reported friendship-like relations with their colleagues at partner institutions. Some interview partners indicated that they also tried to establish contacts between students, even if they are not (yet) taking part in the mobility window. The Hannover Bachelor in Mech. Eng. programme (Op-Lop), for example, offers students short trips to some partner institutions in addition to the mobility window. The participating students are hosted by local students and reciprocate this hospitality when their peers visit Germany. The cost of this trip is partly covered by the institution. This practice is seen as very helpful in establishing personal contacts as well as motivating students to take part in the actual mobility window.

Overall, mandatory mobility windows (Ma-Hips and Ma-Lops) tended to be based on more formalised forms of cooperation, e.g. by appointing designated “account managers” or an advisory board, as well as the organisation of dedicated meetings for planning and discussing issues associated with the mobility window.

5.2.3 Typical challenges and identified solutions

A main challenge that was mentioned by respondents was ensuring the continuity of cooperation. Several interviewees expressed their concern about relying on a single person in establishing and maintaining the cooperation:

“A partnership [...] may be established by one single person – but when that person is not there as a consolidator anymore, the cooperation might break.”

Apart from this potential challenge, the interviewees mentioned a few challenges specifically related to the choice of partners or modes of cooperation. Some had experienced linguistic difficulties or cultural differences which had

complicated the cooperation in the beginning, but these had usually resolved themselves with time.

However, a great number of the interviewed programme coordinators attributed their successful cooperation to a careful choice of partner institutions. The importance of partners' commitment and willingness to cooperate was often highlighted: *"It is important to have good and like-minded partners"*. Building on the existing contacts and previous experiences was therefore seen by many as a means to ensure successful cooperation in planning and executing the mobility window:

"The choice of partners is important and a means to ensure quality – this is why personal contacts stemming from research are important."

Several interviewees also noted that a cooperation which provided advantages for both partners had the best chances of success:

"One needs to find partners that are equally interested in the cooperation. There needs to be a mutually beneficial relationship."

5.3 A one-way or a two-way window? One or multiple destinations?

The organisation of 'traffic flows' in a mobility window is an important parameter in the process of designing and running mobility windows, which is closely linked to the cooperation issue.

The traffic configurations of mobility windows are dependent upon the number of possible destinations served by a mobility window as well as upon the directions of mobility circulations in a window. Thus, one can distinguish, from an institution's point of view, between one-way (sending only) windows focused on sending students abroad and two-way (reciprocal) windows designed for both outgoing and incoming student mobility.

An institution may enter bilateral agreements for sending or exchanging students with one or several institutions, or multilaterally agree on traffic paths for students with several partners. Several destinations for students can thus be offered through either multilateral agreements or through several bilateral ones. Possible mobility window configurations, varying by type of interactions and by number of destinations within a window, are presented below.

Table 4: Configurations of mobility windows by type of interactions and number of destinations

One way, bilateral, one destination: $A \rightarrow B$ A sends to B	Reciprocal, bilateral, one destination: $A \leftrightarrow B$ A exchanges with B
One way, bilateral, several destinations: $A \rightarrow B, A \rightarrow C, A \rightarrow D$ A sends to several institutions B, C, D	Reciprocal, bilateral, several destinations: $A \leftrightarrow B, A \leftrightarrow C, A \leftrightarrow D$ A exchanges with several institutions B, C, D
Reciprocal, multilateral, one destination ("mobility circle"): $A \rightarrow B, B \rightarrow C, C \rightarrow A$	Reciprocal, multilateral, several destinations ("consortium model"): $A \leftrightarrow B, B \leftrightarrow C, C \leftrightarrow A$ Institutions A, B, C exchange students

The number of destinations in a window can be conceived at the design stage or later, for instance, if new partners decide to join an already operating window consortium.

Interestingly, the findings of our field research showed that, on the one hand, some two-way windows were actually reciprocal only on paper, being *de facto* one-way mobility windows. In the respective cases, a window which was officially designed to serve both incoming and outgoing students was in fact only used for sending students to partner institutions abroad or vice versa.

On the other hand, in some of the investigated cases of one-way mobility windows, these unilateral windows developed an aspiration to become more reciprocal in one way or another. For example, in the case of the UCU China programme, the partner institution which used to send students to a country of destination through a one-way window got interested in receiving students as well.

In the identified two-way window cases, the students could either go to one destination only, which often happened within double degree programmes, or they could more or less choose their host institution (e.g. in the Erasmus Mundus programmes). In most cases, the institutions tried, to the extent possible, to accommodate students' first and second priority destination choices.

We also found out that the partners who acted as both sending and receiving institutions sometimes agreed on 'mobility slots', i.e. the number of places for outgoing and incoming mobility assigned to each participating institution. However, in a few cases the partner institutions did not manage to use their 'quotas' because of a low intake of students, the latter being not so inter-

ested in the destination(s) on offer, or because they could not offer financial support for the total number of slots available and the students could not find alternative sources of funding.

Those institutions that played according to the reciprocal mobility rules reported paying special attention to the issues of reciprocity and balance in their mobility window(s). However, in reality, only a few of the reviewed bilateral reciprocal windows reported a balance in terms of the number of outgoing and incoming students.

Several factors which influence students' choice of a host institution and, consequently, balance within the reciprocal mobility windows can be derived from our study.

Prestige

Prestige or, more precisely student perceptions of prestige, seems to affect the window mobility balance sheets. Thus, prestigious and highly competitive universities participating as partners of the mobility windows attracted more incoming students, while their outbound mobility numbers were smaller given that their students often preferred to take full advantage of the courses offered at home. This was, for example, the case of a French mobility window partner, a highly prestigious *grande école* which participated in the mobility window of the UTCB MSc in Civil Eng. programme in Romania. Reasonably, the students enrolled in France, once admitted to this very selective institution, which requires two years of preparatory courses, were not interested to leave and study abroad, even if for only a short period of time, irrespective of the country of destination. This was, thus, a case of lack of interest in study abroad overall, rather than lack of interest in the partner institution(s).

Tuition fees

Tuition fees were also found to be important for balanced mobility windows. As reported by one programme coordinator, the students participating in a mobility window with a US partner were expected to pay tuition fees at their home and host institution at the same time, which posed difficulties in motivating students to use this window. Interestingly, another programme coordinator reported that even despite an agreement between partners to waive the tuition fees at the home institution for the duration of a mobility experience, not all of the partners were equally committed to sending (i.e. 'losing') their paying students abroad.

The unbalanced numbers were also explained by different country and institutional capacities to allocate funding (travel grants, scholarships, etc.) for the support of students participating in window mobility.

Language

In multiple and multilateral window arrangements, the language issues were found to be rather important. Those institutions offering the courses in English rather than in a national language reported to be more successful in attracting incoming students. A similar situation could also be observed within the same institution where some programmes offered English-language tuition, and thus were able to attract and take more incoming students, while others did not. This situation resulted in the unequal distribution of incoming students and the related administrative workload within the institution. In this context one of the interviewed programme coordinators stressed that *“it would be good if all programmes were responsible for offering a certain amount of courses in English for their incoming exchange students”*.

Overall, the implications of the unbalanced window mobility flows seem to be insignificant for the sampled programmes because of the relatively small numbers of students participating in them (see section 9.1). In this vein, the interviewed institutions reported to be largely unaffected by the ‘loss’ of students. Even if they experienced larger outgoing mobility numbers, the majority of the student cohort still remained at the home institution. Nevertheless, some institutions that received more incoming students through mobility windows reported facing some challenges related to bigger classes and high pressure on lecturing and administrative staff.

To conclude, a certain degree of balance seems to be desirable in mobility windows, but it does not always have to be a one-to-one ratio between outgoing and incoming numbers for a mobility window to function well.

5.4 Who takes part in window mobility?

Students are the net beneficiaries and end users of mobility windows. We therefore paid particular attention to matters related to the selection of students for participating in window mobility, one of the central elements of running a mobility window. In addition to this institutional perspective on student participation, we also focused on students themselves, i.e. their awareness of various mobility window opportunities, as well as sheer numbers of those who go through mobility windows. The related findings resulting from our site visits are summarised below.

5.4.1 Selection

'Early on' vs. 'delayed' selection

The selection of students for window mobility appears to happen in practice at two main points in time: either at the entrance or enrollment stage (typically, for programmes with Ma-Hip and Ma-Lop windows) or at a later stage during the study programme (typically, for Op-Lop and Op-Hip windows). In programmes with a mandatory mobility window, the admission of each student in the programme naturally implies evaluating his or her preparedness for the foreseen experiences abroad. In our sample of programmes, we observed such an early selection process, for example, in joint degrees funded by the Erasmus Mundus programme (e.g. Groningen EM MSc CEMACUBE or Groningen EM MA Euroculture).

Similar procedures were observed in the programmes that function only as double degrees, i.e. the programmes where the double degree option does not constitute a parallel (international) track, but also, although quite rarely amongst the programmes we covered, in traditional degree programmes (e.g. the Saxion BBA Tourism Management programme). In all these arrangements, all the students who were accepted to such a programme have to take part in window mobility at some stage during their studies, so in that sense they are 'all in' from the start.

However, the majority of programmes we looked at have optional rather than mandatory mobility windows. As a consequence, the students can decide if they are interested in taking part in the mobility window(s) after they have studied for some time in the respective programme.

When exactly students have to decide depends very much on each particular programme. Typically, in the case of two-year Master's programmes with one single optional window students are asked to apply for the mobility window towards the end of their first year of study. For programmes with multiple mobility windows, such application and selection rounds take place more than once during the study programme, generally once per window.

It was interesting to observe that while some students in such programmes were aware of the existence of the window(s) from the start and sometimes even chose the respective programme because of its international component, others only became aware of this possibility shortly before the selection process was organised.

Selection criteria

The criteria applied for selecting students for window mobility do not differ much from those used for other types of mobility. In addition, no significant

difference in terms of selection criteria applied was found for different types of mobility windows. In the sampled programmes, the applied selection criteria mostly represented a mix of:

- foreign language skills;
- academic standing; and
- students' motivation.

Some programmes might formulate additional requirements or recommendations informing the students about different or potentially more difficult living conditions in a country of destination. For example, one interviewee pointed out that the participating students should demonstrate "physical health and maturity (robustness, allergy-free, abilities to cope with the unexpected, etc.)".

The above criteria were assessed by different means, including:

- language tests;
- academic records (e.g. grades, minimum amount of credits);
- individual project proposal;
- motivation letter;
- interviews with a programme coordinator or representatives of the international office; and
- CV.

Referring specifically to the first criterion related to language proficiency, the students are generally tested or evaluated for their competencies in what is to be the language of instruction at the foreign partner. However, in cases where the language of instruction differs from the local/domestic language in the host country, the mastery of the latter is generally not required, although it might constitute an advantage. This applies to all programmes covered in the study.

The *minimum thresholds*, at least for the language and academic record criteria, varied significantly across the sampled programmes. In highly selective programmes, the programme coordinators reported giving preference to well-performing students in the selection process and "*picking the best students – both in the interests of students (guarantee that they can cope well with a new learning environment) and of faculties*". One interviewee reported about a "*bona fide agreement to send reliable students*" between the partners. Such motivations of the programme coordinators were partly explained by the meritocracy of the mobility support schemes open to students (e.g. travel grants and scholarships). Other programmes, however, followed a very open strategy, allowing "*everybody who wanted to participate [...] to do it*".

Interestingly, the case of the UBB MA in Political Studies programme revealed that those students who did not necessarily have the best academic perfor-

mance but who had been selected for window mobility (generally because they were very convincing during the interview stage) considerably improved their academic performance afterwards. The success of these previously ‘under-appreciated’ students was attributed by the programme coordinator to a positive, more stimulating change in the learning environment.

Another aspect that seemed to differ across the interviewed study programmes, and implicitly mobility windows, is the weight given to the different selection criteria. Specifically, some programmes seem to give precedence to the linguistic aspect. For example, for the Ca’Foscari BSc in Economics and Management programme, organised in cooperation with a US university, *“English language skills are paramount”* in the selection process.

In turn, other programmes have clearly taken the academic record as the top criterion. A clear example is the UNICAM MSc in Computer Science programme, for which the *“grades and qualities are most important in the selection process”*. Here, the coordinators rely substantially on the professors’ capacity to evaluate the students’ potential: *“As a professor you feel who is good as a student and flexible enough to go abroad”*.

In the same vein, some programmes, typically with Op-Lop and Op-Hip windows, attached importance to students’ ‘softer’ skills that can help facilitate their study and stay abroad. For example, travel experience associated with students’ ability *“to handle the mobility intensive programme”*, as well as maturity (i.e. ability to deal with the unexpected), were particularly appreciated by some programme coordinators.

Another interesting observation, although not fully surprising is that, given that the funding for the mobile students who go abroad through mobility windows is very often provided through specific mobility programmes (e.g. ERASMUS), the selection criteria for students who wanted to take part in the window often mirrored the funding selection criteria. In such cases, like at the UNIBUC BA in Social Work programme, the interview with the students was just a pre-selection, and the students’ acceptance was only finally confirmed when they were also accepted as ERASMUS students.

5.4.2 Student numbers and selectivity

As noted in section 5.3, in some cases, the partner institutions in a window negotiate the number of slots available for window mobility. This means in practice that in some cases the home institution cannot send more students abroad through the window than agreed with its partner(s). This characteristic has an impact on the selection process of students in cases where the number of applicants for window mobility is higher than the number of slots available. In such cases, the selection becomes more competitive. We also

found cases where fewer students than the number of places available were interested in window mobility, as we will detail further below.

At the same time, participation rates were subject to fluctuations. The experience shared by the coordinators of several programmes revealed that in the beginning students' interest in a new mobility window, translated into the number of applications received, was often lower than the number of places available. Yet, over time, the interest grew so that more applications were submitted than places available. As a result, some of the concerned institutions investigated ways to increase the number of slots offered to students through a particular mobility window. However, we also found at least one case whereby students' interest in a specific window decreased over time because of other, potentially more attractive, mobility opportunities arising.

5.5 Advertising mobility windows

Advertising mobility windows means dealing with the following questions: How to reach prospective students and mobility window users? What channels to use? How to present a mobility window as a valuable part of a study programme?

Typically, higher education institutions use a broad range of face-to-face, print and online information tools and marketing channels to promote their study programmes. Naturally, the scope of advertising efforts largely depends on a specific programme and/or an individual institution, whereby some programmes can be more actively (and attractively) promoted than the others.

Interestingly, the analysis of promotion activities pursued by the sampled programmes revealed that information activities and channels seem to be (a) more or less the same for the majority of the interviewed programmes and (b) similar to those generally used by higher education institutions for marketing international study programmes and other mobility opportunities.

Mobility windows are often advertised explicitly as integral components of the programmes in which they are embedded, rather than on their own, with the exception of modular optional windows which can be integrated into different study programmes.

Channels that were most frequently used by the interviewed programmes for disseminating information about mobility windows include online marketing (programme websites, student portals, education ministry portals, emails, etc.), print media (promotional brochures, flyers, posters, etc.) and face-to-face contacts (information events, individual consulting, etc.).

5.5.1 Information and marketing channels

Online marketing and print media

The quality and attractiveness of online and print promotional materials, as perceived by both the interviewed students and programme coordinators, vary significantly. In a few cases, students found the information presented on the websites to be confusing and not up-to-date. Remarkably, students who already had some prior mobility experience seemed to attach less importance to the attractiveness of the promotional materials.

It is also interesting to note that social media were overall not very actively used by the sampled institutions for advertising programmes with mobility windows. At the same time, some mobile students used social networks and blogs to report on their mobility experiences, followed by other (potentially mobile) students.

Face-to-face contacts

Face-to-face contacts constitute another typical information channel for advertising mobility opportunities. For example, these can be contacts with relevant academic and administrative staff who advise students on mobility opportunities, advantages and support schemes (e.g. advice about relevant preparatory classes, available scholarships). It was also found to be not unusual for pro-active students to directly approach professors with the questions about existing and recommended mobility opportunities.

Information events are organised by international offices and faculty members in order to reach specific groups of prospective students. Such information sessions can be held during classes or as part of broader information events, for example, international orientation weeks, open days or even national education fairs. As reported by the programme coordinators, previously mobile students were often invited to share their mobility experiences.

Short-term study trips

Summer schools and other types of short-term study trips to a country of destination, so-called 'mobility appetisers', are sometimes used by the programme coordinators to raise the interest of potentially outgoing students in full-fledged mobility opportunities via windows. For example, this was done for students from 'less internationally oriented' disciplines as revealed by the case of the Lahti Bachelor in Nursing programme.

Internal vs. external advertising

The analysis of the advertising efforts made by the sampled institutions showed that the programmes with mandatory mobility windows generally advertised themselves both internally (with all relevant faculties and programmes at a home institution) and externally (with students from other higher education institutions with the appropriate profiles)². These types of programmes primarily focused their promotional effort on the prospective students and organised dedicated information sessions at the pre-enrollment stage.

On the other hand, programmes with optional mobility windows unsurprisingly were found to promote optional mobility opportunities amongst their own, already enrolled students. In the reviewed cases, promotional presentations about these types of mobility windows were organised for freshmen cohorts in the beginning of the first academic year and at a later stage.

Students as ambassadors of mobility windows

Both programme coordinators and students believe that students themselves, and particularly the alumni of mobility windows, are the best information multipliers, mobilisers and ‘salespersons’. For example, some interviewed students mentioned: *“The most important encouragement comes from other students”*; seeing a *“colleague being successful is a big selling point [...] and is more interesting than what teachers have to tell”*.

Against this background, many of the reviewed institutions are trying to encourage students with mobile experiences to share their experiences with their peers, for example, in the form of online feedback reports or participation in information sessions. However, the contributions of returning students seem to be largely organised on an *ad hoc* basis. Despite students’ overall eagerness to share experiences with the peers, this ‘information resource’ is still underexploited by some institutions. One of the challenges in this respect is related to difficulties in reaching out to formerly mobile students in those cases where they stay at the home institution for only a short period of time (if at all) after the mobility period.

5.5.2 Mobility window as a selling point of the programme

Some of the interviewed institutions, primarily with mandatory mobility windows, tended to perceive mobility opportunities as a *distinctive selling point* which helped them to increase the attractiveness of the educational offer

² In some cases the programme coordinators deliberately decided to focus their promotional effort on their own students, explaining this by a lack of administrative capacity required to organise bigger external promotional campaigns, or by the insufficient quality of external applicants.

and to involve a bigger variety of prospective students, including from other faculties and institutions.

At the same time, the feedback of the interviewed students is much more diverse, so it is not really clear whether students selected a particular study programme because of a possible or obligatory mobility component. For example, in the case of Ma-Hip types of mobility windows (often found in double degree programmes) students were quite motivated and enthusiastic about mobility experiences. However, they inclined to attach more importance to study and professional benefits offered by the programme rather than to the mobility window itself. Students who opted for the programmes with Ma-Hip and Ma-Lop windows proved to be well-informed about the existing mobility opportunities prior to enrollment. In addition, in several reviewed Op-Lops mobility windows were not regarded by students as a big selling point.

Similarly to student perceptions of mobility opportunities in general, student opinions about the value of mobility windows varied across disciplines and in relation to past mobility experiences. For example, students enrolled in international business programmes generally expressed more appreciation of mobility window opportunities in the interviews compared to those who were enrolled in information technology, engineering or nursing. According to the programme coordinators, the latter group of students sometimes required more encouragement, for instance, in the form of additional information about scholarships and mobility advantages.

Still, a certain tendency to perceive mobility window opportunities as a selling point can be observed in case of those students who already had a prior mobility experience and who are more advanced and sure about their pathways, for example, those with established country-specific professional or academic interests.

5.5.3 Challenges of advertising mobility windows

Window rivalry

Some types of mobility windows seem to be more difficult to advertise. For example, this is the case in some Op-Lop windows for several reasons. First, students tended to perceive optional mobility windows with loosely-prescribed content as rather secondary, add-on opportunities. Although all students were found to be regularly informed about the existing Op-Lops during international orientation weeks, only very enthusiastic ones appeared to actually opt for them. In addition, several optional mobility opportunities can potentially compete with each other and with Ma-Hips and Ma-Lops in case of multi-window programmes. In a few cases, Ma-Hips were reported to be

more actively and systematically promoted compared to less structured optional exchange opportunities within the same multi-window programme(s).

However, there were also the cases of some Op-Hip windows (e.g. UCU in Africa, UCU Transnational Law) which needed no particular advertising, being over-subscribed because of their unique prescribed content. In these cases, as reported by the interviewees, the related information could even be shared selectively with those students who were considered to be 'fit' for the respective mobility window experience.

Nearby vs. exotic

Several interviewed programme coordinators stressed difficulties with advertising nearby or exotic destinations. The former were sometimes perceived by the programme coordinators as possibly too boring for students, while the latter were regarded as a possible hurdle. However, from a student perspective, there is no unanimity about the advantages or disadvantages of exotic vs. nearby destinations. Thus, some students perceived the regional mobility experience (e.g. in the Nordic region) as particularly relevant for their future professional endeavours, while others showed more interest in faraway destinations, such as Asia (mainly China) or Africa.

Sustainable advertisement strategies

Several institutions expressed concerns about their overall capacity to elaborate and implement a comprehensive and sustainable strategy for advertising their mobility windows. Although the programme coordinators fully realised the need and the values of a more systematic approach, they often lacked the required administrative resources. This situation is often aggravated by the fact that advertising and running successful mobility windows requires the provision of rather individualised information and other support.

Several practical recommendations can be derived from the above-presented empirical findings.

First, the clarity and timeliness of information shared with students seems to be highly important for a successful advertising effort. These aspects appear to have more significance compared to visual attractiveness of the promotional materials.

Second, a broad range of diversified student-centred information channels is recommended to be used. Specifically, due attention has to be paid to involving students in advertising mobility windows both through face-to-face contacts and online interaction, particularly via social media. Sharing experience via peer networks often evolves without the direct participation of institutions.

The programme coordinators should be aware of these subtle and efficient information channels and incorporate them into their advertising strategies.

Last but not the least, the advertising and information efforts have to be coordinated with other stages of running mobility windows and therefore properly reflected in a dedicated strategy which is required for a systematic and consistent information campaign.

5.6 Funding mobility windows

Mobility windows lead to additional costs

Highly-integrated mobility windows are labour-intensive in their maintenance for the coordinators/institutions compared to other forms of mobility that leave most of the coordination tasks to students. At the initial stage, the set-up of a mobility window inevitably draws on the resources of an institution, which may not have been budgeted for the mobility windows as such. To start with, it often requires the input of academic staff to introduce or integrate a mobility window into a curriculum. In some more advanced set-ups, other staff members may also be involved in providing administrative and student support. Such additional staff inputs generate major costs in the process of setting up a mobility window.

Another frequently mentioned cost item for installing a mobility window is the cost for providing mobility scholarships to the students enrolled in the programme. The cost of providing mobility support may have to be funded out of the institutions' own budget (in the form of fee waivers, scholarships and/or monetary subsidies) or through external funding sources. Compared to the staff costs mentioned above, the costs of providing mobility scholarships, especially for travel or accommodation, are far more visible than hidden costs such as staff time input. They are direct expenses that must be met by either the institutions, sponsors or the students themselves and, thus, often turn out to be a top-level concern to the organisers of mobility windows (see section 7.3).

Mobility windows require start-up investments from institutions

Ideally, seed money for setting up a mobility window and for supporting student mobility in the framework of a window should be made available to the study programmes to meet the additional costs mentioned above. In practice, we were told that additional funding was largely made available to on-going programmes that already have a mobility window, often on a competitive basis. There are only few available sources for start-up funding for institutions to develop a window from scratch.

The above-stated practice that windows must first be established before funding becomes accessible implies that not all the institutions are on an equal footing to set up and maintain a mobility window. Institutions with abundant financial and human resources are better prepared to offer mobility windows and compete for external funding sources than those with limited resources. This funding disparity may not be so apparent at the initial stage if institutions merely establish a window in a study programme with little funding support. However, the gaps may become increasingly visible during the long-term operation of the windows and with the increasing requirement for student support, as detailed in section 7.3.

Institutions tend to support mobility windows in kind rather than in cash

In most cases studied, mobility windows were a result of bottom-up initiatives, mainly driven by the academic staff, rather than top-down initiatives from the institutions. In such bottom-up initiatives, the academics introducing the windows were normally expected to volunteer and work extra hours when the additional work exceeded their existing scope of responsibilities. Academic staff's overtime was rarely compensated, while their staff costs were considered in-kind support for setting up a window. When funding was made available, it tended to be limited in amount and scope, such as contributions to the travel costs for attending the meetings with partners.

Occasionally, we encountered institutions which support internationalisation as a general institutional policy, providing administrative support with or without providing additional funding. For example, the University of Groningen allowed arrangements in the Faculty of Economics and Business for the administrative staff, who were allowed to reshuffle their tasks to provide better student advice and support in the framework of mobility windows. The University of Bucharest was reported to have topped up 20-30% of the salaries of the staff involved in the initial set-up of a window for two to three months.

Of course, there is also fully funded staff involvement under the Erasmus Mundus programme and other EU or national funding programmes for offering joint degree programmes and sustaining the student and staff mobility activities necessary in the framework of the joint programmes. Such external funding sources, restricted in duration and highly competitive, are, however, provided only to a limited number of beneficiaries. The majority of institutions would still need to rely on their own means to introduce and sustain mobility windows.

Public funding remains the major source of funding for mobility windows

While public funds are not everywhere available up-front as 'seed money' for starting up mobility windows and some institutions may still get by without

sufficient funding initially, they are crucial for sustaining the operation of mobility windows in the long run. A large share of the mobility windows analysed in this study is financed by public funds. They include national funding that is channelled through the budget of an institution as in-kind support to faculty-driven initiatives; competitive national funding programmes for supporting institutional mobility initiatives; and the EU funding programmes (e.g. Erasmus Mundus and Tempus). This observation largely coincides with the current situation that most European universities remain largely dependent on public rather than private funding sources.

A few common challenges named by the interviewees may shed light on why public funds remain the major funding source for mobility windows in Europe. First, while many coordinators felt increasing financial or moral obligations with an increasing degree of structuredness of a mobility window, the charging of additional fees which may assist covering costs or generate profit remain a taboo in many European countries, if not forbidden in a legal sense. According to the students we interviewed, it is also rather unusual for students in some European countries, such as Italy, to take up loans for their studies. Moreover, fundraising is not quite part of the European culture yet and definitely not within the scope of responsibilities of academics. While they are often the initiators of mobility windows and are willing to volunteer for making curriculum changes, they have little time left for the administration of mobility windows. This, therefore, leaves the funding gap of supporting student window mobility for the institutions to fill.

Attempts to diversify funding sources for mobility windows

Amongst the programme managers interviewed, some have attempted to charge tuition fees from self-financing students who are not scholarship holders. However, even with reputable programmes such as the Erasmus Mundus programmes in well-known institutions, the recruitment of self-financing students was described as difficult. Very often, the institutions have to offer fee waivers, and in some cases, even subsidies for such self-financing students to fulfil the compulsory mobility required in the programme. In principle, the students who opted for enrolling in a study programme with built-in optional or mandatory mobility programmes should be aware of the financial implications of their decision. In practice, most institutions cannot free themselves from the moral obligation of supporting students who may have underestimated the costs of a mobility-intensive programme. As a result, the pressure to provide own funding or to advise students on alternative financial means remains on the side of the institutions.

The financial pressure to sustain the operation of a mobility window has its positive and negative outcomes. On the negative side, some institutions de-

cided to close down a programme to cut the loss when the additional public funding sources were exhausted. Some decided to scale down by reducing the number of partners or by replacing face-to-face meetings with virtual mobility. On the positive side, some took the pressure as a drive to reach out for private funding sources, such as more active recruitment of self-financing students or more proactive fundraising activities to solicit sponsorships from private companies or subsidies from foundations.

Institutional schemes come into play in the funding of mobility to third countries

Once a window is built into a study programme, the institution is usually confronted with the obligation to provide (at least advice on) financial support to the students. For European students, ERASMUS turns out to be the most frequently used funding instrument to fill the gaps, according to our site visit findings. Without many other choices, many institutions interviewed in this study seemed to be actively promoting ERASMUS study and ERASMUS placement funds to the students in the framework of mobility windows. As for European students who chose to study abroad in a country not covered by ERASMUS or Erasmus Mundus, the additional costs for completing the mobility window had to be covered by the students' themselves or through institutional schemes. In a few better-off cases, the universities' own funding schemes have played an important role in bridging the gaps between Europe and the rest of the world (see section 7.3).

5.7 Students' motivations and expectations

Why do students choose to go abroad and what do they expect from the period abroad? There is plenty of literature on student motives for international mobility periods as part of studies, which shows that personal, academic and career related motives are all involved in a decision to go abroad. Being exposed to another culture, learning a new language, getting new perspectives on studies and experiencing another academic environment, improving career prospects and the possibility for self-development are all strong motivators that most outgoing students share. However, amongst these, the motives related to experiencing another culture and personal development often seem to be the most important reasons to study abroad (e.g. CIMO, Swedish Council for Higher Education, & Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2013; Krzaklewska, 2008; Maiworm & Teichler, 2002).

According to our findings, students' motivation for embarking on an integrated study abroad period taking place in the form of a mobility window do not differ notably from the motives for opting for a typical exchange. During the site visits we asked students in the programmes with mobility windows to

indicate reasons for going abroad, as well as their expectations on the study abroad period. The students provided similar feedback for both motives and expectations. Therefore, these two questions are integrated below. The most frequently mentioned motives and expectations are presented below:

Culture related motives and expectations

This can refer to interest in one specific area or country a student wants to get to know better or to a more unspecified interest in discovering new cultures in general.

Language learning

This motive can refer to improving language proficiency in general, improving the proficiency in the language of the host country or improving English language proficiency. Language learning is often combined with the cultural motivation mentioned above.

Personal development, broadening one's mind, gaining experience

This motive involved many different ways of articulating the expectation that going to a foreign country was beneficial for the outgoing student's personal development. Students expected to gain new experiences, to be introduced to new situations, to visit different places and to confront different opinions and ideas. They also expected that this would lead to personal growth and a broadening of their minds. Issues related to personal development were most frequently mentioned in the interviews.

Academic and study related motives and expectations

Academic motives and expectations can also be of different kinds. Mostly students expected to experience different kinds of learning environments, develop different approaches and viewpoints to their studies. In some cases, they reported being interested in one particular course or a field of specialisation available at the host university. Some students stated more practical expectations. For example, they expected to benefit from good teaching, proceed in their studies, earn credits, and get their studies recognised.

Future career prospects and professional development

Career prospects and job-related expectations and motives were also often mentioned. The students expected the experience abroad to help them find a good job after their studies and to broaden their employment possibilities. They also hoped that the time abroad would be beneficial for their professional development. Some students mentioned more concrete expectations like the possibility to combine theoretical studies with a practical internship.

Networking

The social part of studying abroad was also found to be important for the students. They expected to make new friends and be able to build new networks abroad.

Furthermore, the students mentioned the following reasons:

- realisation of a long-standing plan/wish;
- mobility is a mandatory part of the study programme;
- mobility is fun;
- mobility offers a possibility to live away from (parents') home;
- good financial support for the mobility period made mobility attractive;
- support and promotion from the teachers made mobility opportunities attractive; and
- convincing and intensive preparatory courses made mobility attractive.

Only few students shared their motives for not going abroad.

A few students voiced their concerns about study abroad. This indicates that even if many students are used to being internationally mobile, study abroad can still cause extra stress and concern for a number of students. The students were concerned about:

- difficulties in adapting to a new city/country;
- difficulties in practical arrangements, e.g. organising accommodation; and
- managing in the new learning environment at a host university.

We also encountered cases of previously mobile students who were not interested in additional mobility experiences any more. One reason for avoiding an additional mobility experience, i.e. an optional study abroad period (in a situation where the student already had one mandatory mobility period) was the fact that the student had created connections to the local industry and wanted to keep these contacts. Another reason for choosing not to further go abroad in the case of an Erasmus Mundus double degree programme student was the tight timetable and difficulties in practical arrangements. In those cases when a student has already made several shifts between various countries during the studies, it could be more convenient and also more efficient for him or her to stay in one university a bit longer, rather than arranging visa, accommodation and other practicalities once again.

Furthermore, several students reported that they did not have any specific expectations about the mobility period or simply expected their studies and life to go on as before.

Most of the interviewed mobile students pointed out that their positive expectations were well met – or that the mobility period was even better than they had expected. Anticipated difficulties were usually proven wrong or overcome. On the whole, the formerly mobile students considered mobility a very positive experience. In some individual cases, expectations were not met and there was disappointment. In these cases, the student was not able to meet locals or to use the local language as much as expected. Other cited reasons for disappointment were unsatisfying housing conditions in the host country and the quality of the course content in a host university. In one study programme students also reported that they might have had unrealistic expectations about the relevance of international mobility experience for the labour market.

There are no clear differences in expectations between the students in programmes with different types of mobility windows. The expectations related to personal development, cultural aspects, academic matters and career prospects seem to be equally relevant for the different types of mobility windows.

6. Integrating mobility windows into the curriculum

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6.1 Timing of the mobility window

When to go abroad

Decisions on the timing of mobility windows are crucial because the timing has effects on the possible content of the windows. Students are supposed to learn different things at different stages of their degree. The content of mobility windows is discussed in more detail in section 6.2. Mobility windows are often organised at a later stage of studies (third year in Bachelor's degrees and second year in Master's degrees). The main reasons behind this arrangement are:

- universities prefer giving the basic courses to their students themselves – after the student has completed the basic studies, she/he can go abroad and specialise at a partner institution;
- the mobility window fits better in the later parts of the curriculum - after the basic studies are accomplished, the curriculum gets more flexible for accommodating different additional solutions;
- students are more mature to go abroad at a later stage of their studies (in cases where the mobility window is not offered at the very beginning of studies, students have more time to get prepared for the mobility period, for example, in terms of language training); and
- students need some time to adapt to their home institution and its academic culture before going abroad (this reason was mainly cited by two-year joint and double degree programmes at Master's level with many students recruited from abroad).

However, sometimes mobility windows can be offered in the early phase of the study programme for the following reasons:

- organising the mobility window in the early phase avoids disrupting the thesis writing process which is an important part of the second year studies in a Master's degree; and
- offering the mobility window in the early phase of studies gives students more time to deepen the knowledge acquired abroad at their home institution and to share it with their peers.

Our site visits reveal a difference between Bachelor's and Master's programmes in terms of the placement of the mobility window within the degree structure. In the visited Bachelor's degree programmes, students usually did not go abroad at the beginning of the programme. In the Bachelor's programmes examined, there were no cases with the mobility window during the first two semesters and only a few cases with the option to be mobile during the third or the fourth semester (second year of studies). The most typical time for the mobility window in Bachelor's programmes was the fifth semester (third year autumn) or the whole third year. In addition, we encountered some Bachelor's programmes with the mobility window taking place later than the third year, as well as some cases with no fixed time for the window or different options for it.

In the case of Master's degrees, the most frequently observed timing for the mobility window was the second (and last) year of studies. The most frequently mentioned option for the mobility period was the third semester (second year autumn). In the Master's programmes, we also came across cases in which the mobility window took place during the first year. Specifically, these were the programmes with the mobility window during the second semester and the first semester, so the students started their studies going abroad.

Length of mobility windows

In the cases covered by our site visits, one semester abroad (or 30 ECTS credits) was the most typical length for a mobility window. This applies to all types of sampled mobility windows.

The second typical solution for the length of the mobility window involved two semesters or one academic year. However, despite the fact that one can relatively easily identify the two most typical solutions for the length of mobility window, the overall variation of different solutions is high. Various study programmes have different kinds of mobility windows of different length. In our sample, there were also programmes with windows shorter than one semester, such as 15 ECTS credits, as well as programmes with windows longer than one academic year. We also encountered mobility windows with a flexible length, so that, depending on students' choices, the time abroad could vary between six and twelve months or between one and three semesters.

It is important to note that in this study we chose to examine only windows leading to at least 15 ECTS credits. Many study programmes have international summer schools, field trips and other short term mobility options integrated into the curriculum, but these cases are not covered by this study (see section 2.2).

Deciding on the actual timing of mobility windows is however not challenge-free. Some difficulties related to the timing of mobility windows were reported

by the interviewed programme coordinators. One challenge is faced by two-year Master's programmes in particular. Two years is a short period of time for a degree programme and the mobility periods add to the workload related to their organisation and adaptation to a new (academic) culture. The interviewees showed concern about a two-year Master's programme being a tight package with no time to waste. Different steps of studies have to be well planned. This is a challenge for students because they have to quickly make up their minds about taking part in the window mobility along with other decisions on the selection of a thesis topic and a specialisation. It is also a challenge for the study programme because the staff has to prepare students well in advance so that they have timely information on the existing mobility options and relevant timetables.

Differences in academic calendars were also reported as a challenge. The fact that semesters start and end at different times in different countries and there are different holiday seasons affects the periods when students can be sent abroad and received at home. A representative of one joint degree programme with partners in several European countries pointed out, for example, that it was difficult to organise a joint orientation week for all new students in the different institutions because of diverse starting times for the semester in the different institutions. However, it was emphasised that these kinds of practicalities could be solved, for example, with the help of video communications or by slightly modifying the study plans if there was the willingness to do so.

Different structures in curricula may represent another challenge if institutions aim to build a joint module for exchanging students within the consortium. In these cases it is important that students in different institutions follow at least a roughly similar kind of a study plan.

Some interviewees strongly recommended deciding on a fixed time for the mobility window – this could facilitate the administration of mobility and curriculum planning. This arrangement was also reported to be beneficial for the students because they knew when to go abroad and could start planning their mobility period in advance.

6.2 Building the content of the mobility window

The timing and the content of a mobility window are closely related to each other because curricula follow a certain path given that students are supposed to learn different things at different stages of their studies. In section 6.1 it was discussed that most study programmes preferred sending their students abroad at a later stage of studies, rather than at the very beginning. This decision has implications for the content of a mobility window.

The majority of the sampled programmes offered students a possibility to study at a foreign institution rather than do an internship in a company located abroad. The following will therefore examine more closely types of courses included in the windows. Answers to the question of where exactly the mobility window is situated in the curriculum may also reveal to what extent the mobility window is a central element of a degree programme.

In fact, it turned out to be rather difficult to compare the different answers to the question of what was studied abroad. Programmes described the content of their mobility window differently.

The following types of content (referring to the place of the mobility window in the curriculum) were reported:

- specialisation studies/student's specialisation;
- core curriculum;
- mandatory courses;
- professional studies;
- subject relevant courses;
- elective studies;
- minor studies;
- culture and language;
- both mandatory and optional courses; and
- flexible curriculum, studies abroad that can be integrated into different parts/students can choose the content individually.

Specialisation studies were the most frequently reported content of mobility windows. Studying a specialisation at a partner institution makes it possible to use different profiles of the institutional course offer and, thus, to offer students the content they could not have at home. In this context the interviewees often mentioned that the partners in the consortium were selected because of their different profiles within a given field of study. In these cases, the choice made by students for their host institution was at the same time the choice of his/her specialisation. Taking specialisation studies abroad is also well in line with the fact reported in section 6.1 that study programmes preferred teaching the basic studies themselves and sending their students abroad towards the end of the programme.

Studies abroad as a part of elective or optional studies as well as flexible curricula were reported mainly by programmes with mobility windows with loosely prescribed content (Op-Lops and Ma-Lops), whereas studies abroad as a part of the core curriculum were reported mainly by programmes equipped with windows with the highly prescribed content, i.e. of the Ma-Hip or Op-Hip types.

The above list of types of content shows that, in many cases, the content of the mobility window is related to the student's major studies. Such an approach was quite common in the study programmes in our sample. It seems that mobility windows are in many cases centrally integrated into the curriculum. This highlights the fact that international mobility is in many cases not only an add-on, but also an integral part of the study programme.

In some programmes, attempts were also made to include an 'international' aspect in the studies of those students staying at home. In the Leibniz Economic Geography programme, for example, students who chose not to take part in the semester-long mobility window (study abroad) nevertheless spent the semester involved in an internationally-oriented project at the home institution which also included only a short stay abroad of several weeks. In this way, the entire third semester of the programme is designed to impart international skills, regardless of whether students choose the (longer) mobility route or not.

6.3 Working to ensure window recognition

There are two basic ways for institutions and study programmes to ensure the recognition of the mobility window. One approach involves planning and developing the content and the scope of the mobility window beforehand with the partner institution(s). A joint module offered by all institutions or a joint curriculum is designed in such a way that each partner provides a certain specialisation. In this way, the sending institution knows beforehand about the course offer in the partner institutions and the courses students are going to take abroad. Students have only a limited choice on the content of studies abroad. They are offered a fixed package of courses negotiated by institutions, or they can choose between several different packages provided by different institutions.

Recognition in this model is automatic once the sending institution receives certification of the studies the student has taken at the partner institution. Recognition is only denied if the student does not pass the courses in the package. This approach was used by the sampled study programmes with a mobility window with a highly prescribed content (Ma-Hips and Op-Hips).

The other way to ensure recognition is to use a learning agreement between the outgoing student, the sending institution and the receiving institution. The student going abroad prepares a personal study plan based on the host institution's course offerings. There are often some guidelines and restrictions given by the home institution about which kind of courses should be included in the study plan. The study plan can afterwards be checked by a professor,

a programme coordinator, or, as in one case, by an examination board of a home institution in order to make sure that it fits with the guidelines for the mobility window content. In the next step, the study plan of the outgoing student is sent to the host institution for its acceptance and signing. This process is supposed to guarantee that the host institution is prepared to offer the courses approved for the study plan.

Recognition is implemented on the basis of the learning agreement once the sending institution receives a transcript of the courses taken abroad. In case of changes in the course provision abroad, the professor, the coordinator or the board that originally accepted the study plan should be informed accordingly and the modified study plan has to be approved.

This approach comes very close to the typical ERASMUS exchange procedure based on a learning agreement. In fact, some of the interviewees mentioned that they used the same learning agreement procedure for all outgoing students, including ERASMUS and other type of students. The learning agreement model is often used in cases where the content of the mobility window is loosely prescribed (Ma-Lops and Op-Lops).

Usually, learning agreements and recognition are provided on a case by case basis in accordance with the study plans made by individual students. However, in many cases institutions and study programmes seem to have established administrative procedures especially dedicated to dealing with these issues. As revealed by the site visits, even if the recognition procedure is organised on a case by case basis, it still requires a certain degree of automatism to allow institutions to send larger numbers of students abroad.

The study programmes using the learning agreement model emphasised the student's point of view and the value of individual choices. Thus, they reported to find it valuable for a student to have the choice to build the study plan according to his/her personal interests, considering student motivation as the key factor to the success of the study abroad period. They also argued it was good for the students' professional development to be given the opportunities to reflect on their study paths and to make choices for specialisation.

We also encountered study programmes that combined the elements of both the 'planning' and the 'learning agreement' models. Specifically, the institutions agreed with their partners (usually limited in number) to some extent on the course offer provided for the incoming students (e.g. how many credits and what type of courses to be provided) and additionally concluded a learning agreement with the outgoing student.

Furthermore, we came across some cases where (part of) the main content of the period abroad was related to practical training or research work on a

thesis, rather than study at the partner institution. In these cases, time abroad was recognised in a different way, as part of an internship or a thesis.

Finally, we also identified one case where the time abroad was additional to the degree – all necessary studies were already completed by the time student embarked on the mobility window. In this case, a supplement to the degree certificate was provided to the students.

6.4 Typical challenges in ensuring recognition

It is important to note that most study programmes in our sample, regardless of which model of recognition – a coordinated curriculum or a learning agreement – was used, reported that they did not experience any major problems with the recognition of studies abroad (see chapter 8).

In the study programmes in which a joint module/curriculum with a partner institution was developed, the main challenge occurred in the development phase, rather than in the implementation phase when students actually had to go abroad. In particular, in the development phase the study programmes had to integrate different curricula, different degree structures and different traditions of grading and organising tuition. But once this work had been completed and a joint module/curriculum was ready, the recognition process went smoothly.

Despite a generally positive feedback of the interviewees on recognition experiences and practices, some challenges were reported. Specifically, these challenges were related to how the partner institution worked and organised the course offer. For instance, some institutions did not provide enough classes in English. In some cases, the information about the course offer was provided late by the partner. Some institutions were unable to deliver the courses promised to the students or to send the proof of courses attended by a student to her/his home institution in time. These challenges were reported by study programmes with loosely prescribed mobility windows (Ma-Lops and Op-Lops). The same challenges are faced by other types of student exchanges though.

Students' own performance may also be one of the challenges. Student may fail to pass the courses agreed. Even if it is emphasised that these are individual cases only, it may still be desirable to have a recognition policy in place to deal with such exceptional cases.

Different curricula and different degree structures can make it difficult to compare the content of courses taken in a host university. This makes it difficult to evaluate what exactly the student learnt abroad (see section 8.2).

Knowing the partner institutions and their curricula, credit and grading practices is therefore one of the key elements in ensuring the recognition of studies abroad. Certainly, this argument also applies to other types of mobility outside mobility window arrangements. This is what one study programme representative meant when she/he said that recognition was not a problem if the student went to a recognised partner institution.

Institutions and study programmes collect information on their partners on a systematic or occasional basis. Personal contacts between staff members were seen as a good way of getting information, as was student feedback. Some study programmes (Vechta Bachelor in Gerontology and the various study programmes in the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Groningen) reported building a database with the documentation about the study content acquired by their students abroad. Such systematic documentation processes allow the institutions to provide information on different study abroad possibilities for future students and enable tracking the difficulties like changes in the course offer promised by the partners. This kind of information is also used when (re)assessing the institution's partner contracts.

Finally, another key element in ensuring recognition is to provide information on the content and recognition of the mobility window to students early enough, so that they have sufficient time to plan their studies. In this context, one interviewee argued that there were no problems in recognition in such cases where the students reserved a large part of their elective studies for the study abroad period.

7. Organising and supporting window mobility

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7.1 Sharing responsibility – who does what?

Organising a mobility period can be a daunting task for students. Before a student leaves his or her home institution and goes abroad for study or internship purposes, significant planning and preparation has to take place. During this stage, both academic and practical aspects of students' stay abroad have to be organised. In this context, mobility windows are presented as a way to increase the likelihood that a student embarks upon and eventually completes an international mobility phase (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009).

In the context of a mobility window, the preparation of a stay abroad is generally a collaborative effort by the home institution, the host institution/programme and the student. What are the responsibilities of each of these actors, and how are they divided amongst them?

Information

Students need information on both academic and practical aspects of their stay abroad. Deciding whether to go abroad for a part of their studies or for an internship is facilitated by creating an early awareness of this option (if it is an option) and an account of the benefits of such a stay. If students who wish to go abroad have a choice between different host institutions, and access to information on the course offers, research specialisations and distinct characteristics (e.g. special requirements), it is easier for them to weigh the different criteria against each other. Information on practical aspects, such as living costs, can supplement the more academically oriented criteria. Once students have decided to go abroad and they enter the planning phase, they should gain an overview of the next steps in the process and be aware of any crucial deadlines (e.g. for visa application).

In the studied cases, informing students about options for mobility, the different possible destinations and giving an overview of the planning process was often the responsibility of the international office and/or the programme coordinator. The information was provided upon request, on a case by case basis, as well as for all eligible students. The case of the optional mobility windows at Groningen's Faculty of Economics and Business (Groningen BSc in Business, Op-Lop) revealed that the faculty took the lead in the informing students about study abroad semesters. The faculty promotes study abroad

opportunities mainly by organising two on-campus fairs per year targeting potential outgoing students. In addition, workshops informing students about the different study abroad opportunities and pitfalls are organised. In many cases, the incoming students from partner universities were invited to talk to potential outgoing students. At the Dortmund Int. School of Management, students planning their mobility period are given the opportunity to network with other (formerly mobile) students via the institution's intranet. Generally, students, also in other programmes covered in our research, found such contacts very helpful:

"I feel the most important source of information were students who had already been there. I got their contact information from our international coordinator."

Applying

In the context of mobility windows, students may need to apply for

- participation in the mobility window at their home institution;
- admission at the potential host institution; and/or
- an external internship position.

This topic is analysed in more detail in section 5.4.

Financing

Students' expenses during the mobility phase can be considerably higher than during the rest of their studies, although this is not always the case. Figuring out and securing funding for the stay abroad is therefore an essential part of the planning phase for many students. More on this topic can be found in section 7.3.

Planning the content/setting goals

The content of the window, i.e. the specific courses, learning goals, and/or the tasks a student aims to complete during his or her stay abroad, as well as their integration into the home study programme, are of central importance for the mobility window's ability to ensure an optimal link between the home study programme and the mobility period and thus facilitating recognition (section 6.2). Discussing and agreeing on the content of the window is especially important in mobility windows for studies abroad with only loosely prescribed content in order to ensure recognition of credits earned.

Indeed, the site visits showed that study plans and/or learning agreements tended to be of greater importance the lower the amount of prescribed content of the window was. In windows which offered students a choice between different courses (Ma-Lop and Op-Lop – type windows), a study plan was

usually developed beforehand by the student with the help of the programme coordinator, the international office, and/or other academic staff. Learning agreements had to be confirmed by the host institution. In some cases, tutors or a commission of scholars and academic advisors were involved in the related planning processes.

For internships, the approach chosen by the study programme varied considerably. At Saxion BBA Tourism Management, for example, “account managers” (i.e. professors responsible for placing the students in internship positions around the world) match students with internship positions abroad, taking into account students’ interests and wishes: *“Our philosophy is tell us who you are and we’ll find the right company for you.”* Other programmes also made great efforts to ensure internship positions were available for students. In some cases, institutions only provided general support, e.g. through the career centre, without actually arranging internships. In one case (Hannover Bachelor Plus+ China), the programme coordinators had initially helped students with identifying an internship placement abroad; however, it turned out to be a redundant practice as students managed to easily find an internship position once abroad.

Linguistic and cultural preparation

Studying or working in a different country usually requires a high level of language proficiency in the local language and/or English. In most countries, communication with people outside the university walls requires at least some basic knowledge of the locally-spoken language. Preparing for these linguistic requirements in advance can significantly ease the process of adaptation abroad. The same holds true for cultural adaptation: knowledge of cultural specificities and reflection on one’s own cultural assumptions can facilitate cultural integration and reduce the often-cited “cultural shock” (Stronkhorst, 2005).

The preparation of students for their experience abroad did not play a central role in all programmes visited. However, in most cases, the institutions offered language courses to students, which were organised centrally, e.g. through a language centre. Some programmes offered cultural preparation courses. These courses encompassed general intercultural skills and/or country-specific background information. The Hannover Bachelor Plus+ China programme follows one of the most elaborate strategies: to prepare students for their time abroad, a two-week summer school in the country of destination is offered before the actual mobility window. This is supposed to serve several purposes. First, the students can gain an impression of the potential host country and institution and decide if they can adapt to local conditions. Second, the summer school fosters contacts between the students from Germany and China. After the summer school, Chinese students go to

Hannover and are met by the Hannover students they already know, who now act as their ‘buddies’. In this way, Hannover students gain knowledge and experience on China and Chinese culture before going abroad for their studies. Managers of programmes which offered a more extensive cultural preparation often highlighted the importance of this aspect:

“Preparation, especially for young students, is very important, so it needs to be part of a higher education institution’s strategy.”

Practical aspects: accommodation & travel

As the date of departure nears, students need to think about how to get to their destination and where to live during their stay abroad. Besides practical travel arrangements such as booking flights or transfers, some students may also need a visa in order to be able to travel to their country of destination. In addition, staying in an institutional student dormitory often requires an early application, which has to be submitted well in advance of the actual arrival, in many cases. Securing private accommodation can be done either from home (e.g. online) or ‘on-site’ during the first days in the host country. If any support is given in this area at all, then it generally comes from the host and not the home institution.

In almost all sampled cases, students were responsible for making their own travel arrangements. Coordination of dates and arrival times was needed mostly in cases where students traveled in a group (e.g. Vechta Bachelor Brazil programme) or where the host institution offered a pick-up transfer from the airport (e.g. LUISS MSc in Management - Fudan). Both the home and host institution’s international offices often supported the students in obtaining a visa, when necessary.

Finding accommodation in the host country was dealt with in many different ways. Usually, it was the host institution that helped incoming students, either by offering university housing or supporting their search on the private market.

Other programmes tried to involve formerly mobile students or even those currently studying abroad in the process of supporting the to-be-mobile student group (e.g. UTCB MSc in Civil Eng.). Additionally, some students reported helping each other by getting in touch with previous cohorts of mobile students or students from the same country via social networks and email. In one case, this had led to a shared apartment continuously being passed from one student cohort to the next one. Some students reported that they had looked for accommodation only upon arrival in the host country, as this allowed them to make a better assessment of the offered housing.

Support abroad

Once students have arrived in the host country and at their host institution/company, information on practical aspects of everyday life (e.g. public transport, banking, insurance) as well as on rules and regulations of their host institution can help them settle in. A contact person can also provide valuable support in case unforeseen problems arise during their stay abroad.

Once abroad, the host university proved to be the first point of contact for many students. Often, the interview partners reported that the host university offered a “welcome” session, informing students about local conditions and providing an opportunity to make first contacts. A “buddy system” with local students serving as guides and contact persons for the incoming students was also often organised by the host institution. Many students also reported keeping in touch, while abroad, with the programme coordinator or the international office at their home institution, but that did not concern so much the practical aspects of their stay abroad, but rather matters such as changes in the learning agreement.

Dividing responsibilities

The findings of the site visits showed that there was a considerable variety amongst different mobility windows with regard to the distribution of responsibilities between the student, the home institution and the host institution. For example, some mobility windows were organised as a ‘package tour’ in which almost everything was arranged for the students:

“The way we have chosen (to go in a group, to set the curriculum) is the only way. The students could not arrange such a stay themselves.”

Other programmes differ with regard to the degree of support provided to students. In some cases, the degree of institutional support within one mobility window depended on the chosen host institution.

Students’ views on the appropriate amount of support were divergent. Some found the amount of organisational preparation for their mobility period overwhelming:

“I had to arrange all aspects of the trip by myself, which I found a bit surprising. I dealt with the consulates regarding visas, applied to the destination university, arranged the travel and housing, and communicated between my home university and my destination university. I expected that the home university and the destination university would have had more communication with each other, there would be some sort of step-by-step guide for students on how to arrange everything, or that we would have some advice on how to proceed, and overall I felt a bit lost in trying to figure it out myself.”

Others found that “some degree of self-organisation is also justified” – especially in hindsight:

“Organising the trip struck me as very laborious. Looking back, the organisation process, especially abroad, was formative on a personal level.”

Students who did receive a high degree of support, however, were grateful for this:

“I received support from both home and host institutions and that was very valuable. The international officer gave me information on financing and organising the exchange. The international officer at the host university supported me on issues related to housing, red tape and paperwork. I really appreciate the support the international officers gave to me.”

Though one might expect mandatory windows to offer a higher degree of support to students than optional windows, this could not be confirmed by our site visits. The amount of organisation and planning by either home or host institution did not prove to depend on the types of windows. The most common approach to dividing responsibilities explicitly voiced by the interview partners was to share the responsibility more or less evenly between the student, the home and the host institution.

7.2 Typical challenges and identified solutions

Overall, most programme coordinators indicated that the practical aspects of the mobility window usually posed few problems once the set-up had been taken care of. It was mentioned, however, that the person responsible sometimes required support in the form of additional personnel due to the amount of organisation work to be done. Many of the coordinators worked to support the mobility window in addition to their regular duties, without receiving any kind of compensation, e.g. in the form of a teaching load reduction or extra benefits.

When asked about the greatest challenges facing students during their stay abroad, the programme coordinators named academic, general mobility-related, practical and more personal aspects.

Academic challenges

Several interview partners indicated that students had to get used to different styles of teaching and learning in the host country. This referred to professors’ approaches to conveying the material, the expectations towards students’ self-study time and methods, but also examination formats and frequencies which students were not used to:

“The challenges do not really arise from institutional cooperation, but students still face some challenges, determined, e.g. by the way learning is organised.”

In some cases, because of a switch to another system some students received lower grades than usual or even failed a class. In order to avoid the situations whereby the total duration of studies extended, one institution offered additional courses that students could take at home in order to make up for the failed exams abroad.

General mobility-related challenges

General mobility-related challenges included the adaption to the foreign culture and language. In this context, preparatory courses were seen as particularly helpful by some of the programme coordinators. Contact to previously mobile students and learning from their experiences was also thought to help prepare students for experiencing cultural differences.

Practical challenges

Amongst the more practical challenges, finding accommodation in the host country was the most often named one. The interviewed programme coordinators were aware that this was a problem which was often encountered by students. However, in most cases, they could not do much about it as supporting the search for accommodation was often the responsibility of the host university. Besides providing actual housing, what seemed to work best was drawing on the support of currently mobile students. A programme could therefore attempt to reinforce this kind of contact between currently mobile students and students planning to go abroad, e.g. by providing an online forum or preparing a list of practical tips.

Personal challenges

Finally, the interview partners mentioned some cases in which students had had personal difficulties during their mobility period. These included homesickness, especially if the study abroad period was the first time the student had left home, or difficulties in maintaining a long-distance relationship. One interview partner suggested that avoiding a long preparation phase before the mobility period could help prevent challenges that arise from life circumstances changing between the moment when the decision to take part in the mobility window is taken and the time when the actual period abroad starts (e.g. finding a new partner or a job). Of course, this suggestion would only work in optional mobility windows.

Students' view

Students' responses to the question regarding the greatest challenges they had encountered abroad included the same aspects. Finding accommoda-

tion appeared to be the biggest problem from the students' point of view; in some cases, they also expressed disappointment in the accommodation provided by the host university. In addition to the aspects named by the programme coordinators, some students indicated that finding their way around the foreign institution had been a challenge, especially if it was not clear who was the right contact person for questions.

Generally, the great majority of students spoken to were very satisfied with their experience regardless of the difficulties they may have encountered. Overall, dissatisfaction mainly referred to lack of information or structure. Several students expressed the wish for a "timeline" or "handbook" which listed all necessary steps during the process of organising a mobility period abroad: *"It is important to have a schedule of all deadlines before the programme starts – some kind of paper where all you have to do is written down."* Several programmes provided such a list to students. In one programme, for example, a handbook, which provides such practical information to future students, was put together by students themselves, under the supervision of the programme coordinator (Ca' Foscari BSc in Economics and Management). Several programmes also reported planning to produce such guidelines in the near future.

7.3 Funding mobility

Latest research shows that in fact students regard the expected additional financial burden of an enrollment abroad as one of the biggest obstacles to becoming mobile (Orr et al, 2011, p. 177). These apprehensions may not be unfounded, as the range of costs arising for students who participate in a mobility window are, very often, extensive: they have to finance travel (flight tickets to and from the host country as well as for sightseeing) and accommodation (sometimes in the host country as well as at home at the same time). Additionally, the potentially higher living costs in the host country have to be kept in mind. The disparity of the economic situation between sending and receiving country or region is an issue for mobility window coordinators as well as students planning to take up the mobility window opportunity. While students going to a country with lower costs of living may profit, students from less wealthy countries faced with higher costs in the host country may be deterred from taking up the mobility opportunity, if they lack proper support measures.

As mentioned in section 5.3, the issue of tuition fees sometimes also causes problems for students – institutions planning to set up a mobility window have to decide whether incoming students are obliged to pay for tuition or whether the outgoing students continue to pay their fees at home. Particularly for stu-

dents going out of or coming to countries with high costs for education (e.g. United Kingdom) the set-up of these arrangements is of importance. In any case, a double burden with tuition fees should be avoided so that students are not deterred from using the mobility window.

During the site visit interviews, the programme directors and coordinators of mobility windows seemed to be commonly aware of the importance of grants and scholarships for supporting mobility. Especially in study programmes with optional mobility windows the coordinators felt responsible for motivating their students to take up the option, but there were also mandatory mobility windows that treated the funding of mobility with great importance: *"It is critical to have an ongoing flow of funds, so that there is enough money to give scholarships."* This notion is backed up by a student's comment: *"The programme was fully paid for. For me this was the sole possibility to participate in a mobility period."*

Types of sources

We identified four main sources for funding the students' mobility period (completely or in parts):

- European/international scholarships (e.g. ERASMUS);
- national scholarships or loans (e.g. DAAD scholarships);
- institutional scholarships – some courses of study, faculties or institutions offer grants exclusively for students who use their specific mobility window; and
- private funds from students' own sources, like help from their family, savings or income earned while working abroad¹.

With regard to institutional financial support for students, an institution may call on numerous sources to fund student scholarships. These may include external sources sought and coordinated by the institution, as well as funding sources embedded in the budget of the institution itself. Scholarships from internal sources of an institution (e.g. the international office's budget or tuition fees) may be provided out of the general budget for the mobility window or from a separate funding pot, specifically set up for the individual students' grants. Such an in-house financing mechanism may be used to provide full-cost scholarships or to top-up a scholarship from an external source.

In those cases where the overall budget for grants is not sufficient to provide scholarships for all participating students, the institution faces the challenge of distributing the available resources amongst the students based on the

¹ Overview of distribution of total income of students in Europe in Orr, D., Schnitzer, K. & Frackmann, E. (2008).

academic performance or financial situation of the students or the institutions' priorities.

Especially those mobility windows that are established with partner institutions outside the EU have to look for alternative sources of funding. One possibility to be taken into account is to set up partnerships with companies and to seek sponsorships for mobile students' grants. This possibility is particularly relevant for mobility windows that offer internships abroad. The opportunity to apply for the Erasmus Mundus Programme, that includes funding of cooperations with institutions outside the EU, is another source that can be taken into account by students.

In the site visit interviews, all of the above-mentioned four types of funding mobility were mentioned. However, in almost all examined cases that organised mobility windows in the EU the mobile students received financial support through the ERASMUS programme, and thus made use of external funding. Finnish students, for example, also receive their national study allowance when studying abroad. In some cases the amount of ERASMUS money was deemed to be insufficient, and the institution decided to supplement the grant with an extra payment to the students. One example for that practice is UNICAM MSc in Chemistry (Op-Lop), where the double degree students receive a scholarship from the university which is about half the monthly ERASMUS grant.

Several programmes had to look for alternative sources of funding. From the conducted interviews some options could be identified:

- Mobility can be funded from internal institutional sources. This is, for example, the case at the University of Groningen with the Marco Polo Fund. Even though this funding option makes the mobility window coordinator independent of external sources, the institutional funding may still not be enough, with increasing participation in mobility. Thus the University of Groningen had to adjust its conditions for Marco Polo Funds: *"With more students going to study in non-European countries, the funding scheme has stopped financing students going to third countries in the framework of a double/joint degree [...], but increased the share of support for students going to third countries for an exchange semester."*
- The programme may call on national resources (in the home country as well as the host country) to fund student mobility. The UBB MA in Political Studies (Op-Hip) programme in Romania, for example, is supported by DAAD which helps this programme to fund student mobility to Germany.
- Contacts to private corporations or foundations can be established. For example, Dortmund Int. School of Management (Ma-Lop/Op-Lop), as

well as Saxion BBA Toursim Management (Ma-Hip/Op-Lop), were able to solicit some funding support due to their already existing business contacts. Our research indicates that this funding option may be easier to establish either for courses of study in the field of management or business education or for private higher education institutions. Some interviewees revealed, however, that it may be difficult to set up such partnerships from a distance, involving companies in the host countries.

Internships abroad emerged as a special case during the site visits. Some of the mobility windows that include internships abroad were able to work out appropriate arrangements for trainees' salaries. In other cases the coordinators were unable to ensure such a sound agreement. Furthermore, some programme coordinators referred to difficulties posed by labour regulations in the host country which prevented international students from earning money during their stay. These factors were a significant obstacle for students using a mobility window for the purpose of an internship. However, in those cases where students were remunerated for their internship abroad, the respective students often reported that they used the money saved during the internship to cover the additional cost of subsequent stays abroad for study purposes. This was the case for most students in the UTCB MSc in Civil Eng. or the UAIC MSc in Statistics programmes.

Funding beyond the academic aspect

The focus group interviews with the students revealed that international, national and institutional sources of funding seemed in many cases to sufficiently support the academic aspects of their stay abroad. Many students, however, saw other activities, such as travelling in the host country, as an important part of their mobility experience as well. The costs of these additional activities were often covered by students themselves. Students who wanted to get to know their host country by travelling seemed to be more willing to draw on savings, work abroad or ask for their family's help.

Often, students who wished to use their time abroad for "travelling and leisure" in addition to study abroad wanted to either experience an exotic place, like China or African countries, or live in a big European city (e.g. London, Paris or Brussels). While the first group often profited from the lower costs of living in their host country, the latter often had to compensate for the higher costs of living in a metropolis.

Some students seemed to be reluctant to ask their families for help and had instead decided to take a loan. For sufficient financial backup, many students accumulated money from several of the mentioned sources. Some inventive ways of earning money were also mentioned by students:

“I didn’t get anything from my parents. I have worked and got some money saved. I also took the student loan before going abroad. In addition, I wrote a blog during the exchange and got some salary out of it. I would have made it with less money but I wanted to travel and see places.”

Sustainability of mobility windows

Many students will only consider going abroad if there is an appropriate financial support. Therefore, the sustainability of many mobility windows in the long run often depends on a continuous provision of scholarships or other alternative sources of financing.

In this vein, many of the interviewed programme coordinators were concerned about the future of the mobility windows in their programmes once the external funding (be it from Erasmus Mundus, DAAD, or other competitive time-limited funding sources) would come to an end. A significant number of interviewees mentioned that they would face great problems in the near future, if that happened. So the viability of their mobility windows may be dependent on the goodwill of external sources. One observed solution to this pressing challenge may be to ensure sustainability through a mix of funding sources for grants (e.g. 40% from a national source, 50% from a European level and 10% out of an international office’s budget). Even though this practice is intended to ensure the mobility window’s sustainability through independence from unsteady sources, it should be noted that this approach may imply a considerable amount of planning and organisation.

The students have, however, little say over how a mobility window should be financed at a programme or institutional level, once they are enrolled in the programme. Although, in a few rare cases, some students decided to change from an international track to a local track in the course of the study programme so as to graduate with less financial burden.

8. The evaluation stage

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8.1 Collecting feedback

What did students experience during their stay abroad? Did the mobility experience fulfil their expectations? What have they learned, in which areas did they encounter problems? Is there anything they believe future students should know?

Feedback from students who have returned from their stay abroad can provide programmes with the answers to these and other questions and thus deliver valuable information.

The most widespread method for collecting feedback amongst the site visit programmes, regardless of type, was having the students write a report about their experiences after their return. Typically, this report was also available to students planning to go abroad, thus serving the dual purpose of providing feedback to the programme as well as information for interested students. In several cases, mobile students' first-hand experiences were additionally used to inform (potential) mobile students by inviting them to give presentations, initiating contact between students, or offering a forum for exchange.

Other more formal methods of collecting feedback that were mentioned by the interviewees were questionnaires which students completed after their stay, and evaluations of specific courses taken at the host institution. One case involved student representatives in regular meetings of the programme committee to discuss operational matters and take suggestions from students. One of the interview partners responsible for an internship mobility window reported that the programme regularly surveyed companies, i.e. the hosts of the students, on their experiences with the trainees. Overall, the more formal and systematic methods tended to be employed by mandatory window types (Ma-Hip and Ma-Lop).

The majority of the interview partners also stated that they were in relatively close contact with students through face-to-face meetings and personal talks. In some cases, these debriefings were a systematic part of the programme's operation, while in others they depended on the individual programme coordinator. One of the cases named an annual meeting between alumni, students and academic staff as an opportunity to learn about students' experiences. Many interviewees stated that they kept continuous contact with students while these were abroad. Often, this was the case in mobility windows with relatively small numbers of participants.

Rather indirect methods of gathering feedback also came up in the interviews. One interview partner reported looking at assignments students had completed while staying abroad (e.g. reports) to get an idea of what they had learnt and what the focus of the host institution was. Similarly, some interview partners reported monitoring the grades students had received abroad. Both of these approaches can provide insights into students' success as well as into teaching and examination methods at the partner institution, especially if they are supplemented with individual talks.

A point that was also mentioned is that students give feedback to their host institution as well. However, as this was not systematically reviewed, it is not possible to say how common this actually was.

The main challenge regarding the collection of feedback that was mentioned by the interviewees is contacting those students who graduated upon completion of their stay abroad or those moving on to a third institution afterwards. Alumni networks, active use of social media or surveys at the end of the mobility phase can provide opportunities to gather these students' experiences.

Generally, the interviewed students themselves were eager to share their experiences and give feedback to the institution, even if they were often not sure whether their responses had an actual impact. The general openness of returning students to share information about their host institutions and country, especially if this information is of use to future generations of students, however, is an encouraging signal for institutions to draw on this valuable resource.

8.2 Recognition

Transparent recognition procedures are, by definition, a key characteristic of mobility windows. The success of mobility windows partly depends on the extent to which credits earned abroad are recognised towards the home degree. Chapter 6 has already provided an overview of measures to support this end. How effective were these procedures in the site visit cases?

Generally, the recognition of credits earned abroad worked well in all cases observed. Neither students nor programme coordinators reported any systematic problems, and at times did not even fully understand the question, since their window was designed to guarantee automatic recognition. In the majority of programmes, all credits earned abroad were recognised. In cases where not all credits were recognised towards the (home) degree, this was stated clearly in advance. Such 'smooth' recognition seemed to be the norm in all types of mobility windows.

In some cases, credits earned during the mobility phase were not recognised towards the degree, but counted as 'extra credit'. This applied only to optional mobility windows. One student who had experienced this sort of recognition was generally happy with it, but noted that the credit, although going beyond a usual Bachelor's degree, did not count towards the Master's degree pursued later.

Some interview partners noted that a maximum credit limit existed for courses that could be recognised towards the programme, but few had experienced cases in which students had in fact exceeded this limit.

Students' answers indicated that they relied on the study plan/learning agreement as an indication of which courses would be recognised later on. No students reported any recognition problems with courses that were agreed upon in the learning agreement. Even in cases where these courses were in fact not offered at the host institution, the alternative was recognised.

Despite the recognition of credits earned abroad generally working well, the interview partners mentioned some challenges associated with the process. Students, especially, pointed out that the recognition process took a relatively long time in some cases. This had led to some uncertainties regarding issues such as student grants, social security or applications for further studies, as these further activities required documentation of previous achievement.

From the institutional point of view, problematic aspects were mainly those relating to different national systems of allocating credits and grades (see section 6.4). Especially the latter aspect – grade conversion – was noted by several interviewees as an inconvenience. One solution to this challenge included the creation of a grade conversion scheme for all institutions involved. Another solution was to allow students to choose whether to keep the grades earned or re-take the module at the home institution.

Overall, few students reported that their studies had extended due to participation in the mobility window. Even if the total duration of studies was longer than foreseen, students usually put this down to personal choices (extension of stay, travelling) or felt that the extension was "rewarded" by an additional qualification (e.g. a double degree). Timing problems arose mostly in cases where the academic schedules of the home and host institutions were different. This sometimes results in a shorter summer break in which the integration of an (mandatory) internship became practically unfeasible.

Part 3. Conclusions and recommendations

9. The impact of mobility windows

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9.1 Mobility windows – a mass phenomenon?

Even though this study is not quantitative and can therefore not provide representative information of this nature, the question of numbers still posed itself several times during the project: *Are mobility windows a mainstream or a marginal phenomenon?* This question could be understood in at least two different ways. On the one hand, it could be read as an inquiry on whether mobility windows are a model often used by institutions to facilitate mobility, particularly when compared to other types of mobility arrangements. On the other hand, it could be understood as an inquiry on the degree to which students make use of the possibility to participate in such arrangements.

Do many programmes and institutions implement mobility windows?

During the sampling phase, we approached more than 40 higher education institutions in the target countries, several of whom were generally seen as frontrunners in internationalisation. Still, only about half of them said they had at least one programme with a mobility window in place. The respondents often said they made use of many other kinds of mobility arrangements which however did not fall within the scope of our definition of mobility windows. This could be read as a first indication that mobility windows, at least according to our definition presented in section 2.2, might not be such a frequently used means to support mobility after all.

Our research was not designed to examine the reasons for this. However, setting up mobility windows seems to require quite some determination, goodwill and resources. There are also clear benefits attached, but many of them come only in the medium or long run. And in times of austerity and more calls for public accountability, many institutions have to look for activities that pay off sooner rather than later. One can assume that these reasons may deter many institutions from implementing mobility windows in their programmes.

Clearly, however, much more research specifically dedicated to the frequency of mobility windows and, if applicable, reasons for their scarcity would be needed for a final assessment of these issues.

Do the windows support the mobility of most or just a minority of students?

As highlighted several times throughout this publication, mobility windows are often portrayed in the European-level policy discourse as a promising way to increase credit mobility and to reach European mobility targets. However, the programmes covered in the study seem to show a mixed reality. Certainly, in those programmes with mandatory windows (of either the Ma-Hip or the Ma-Lop types) participation in window mobility is 100%. Nevertheless, such programmes only represent a minority within our sample and are, in general (with the exception of the Saxion BBA in Tourism Management), programmes in which the enrolled cohorts of students tend to be rather small. The average number seems to be around 25-30 students per programme. Regarding the optional window programmes (Op-Hip and Op-Lop windows), participation rates in those programmes for which we had this information seem to be between 10-20% of all enrolled students. However, in absolute numbers this translates into as few as two to maximum ten students per programme (average participation being four-eight students per programme, as already discussed in section 5.4).

In the programmes visited, outgoing student numbers did not always reflect the degree of student interest in the mobility windows. In many cases a maximum number of available places was allocated per year. The number of actual slots was always the result of an agreement reached between the partner institutions. Limitations were usually set either because of capacity limits at the host institution/s (e.g. it could not accommodate more than x students per year) or by the support mechanisms of the home programme (e.g. it only had financial support for a limited number of students). During the site visits, we came across both programmes that experienced more interest from students than the available places window mobility could accommodate, as well as programmes that could not really reach the upper (although still small) limit of participation.

In contrast to politicians' ambitions, very few programme coordinators stated they set up mobility windows because they wanted to increase mobility numbers. Other rationales seemed to prevail. Some programme coordinators even deliberately wanted to limit enrollment in their programmes as a means to raise the quality of the education offered and thereby increase students' employability. In their view, smaller-size, targeted programmes could facilitate professional insertion better than mass programmes would. Others specifically recommended limiting participation in window mobility and to only send abroad those students who are 'fit'. One programme coordinator even recommended to "keep it small", referring to the actual numbers of window mobile students.

Several programme coordinators seemed to see mobility windows as an instrument for the efficient handling of mobility. In their view, this 'beaten track' approach removes some important mobility obstacles that other kinds

of mobility arrangements do not. They felt that mobility windows helped increase the overall quality of the mobility experience, but not so much sheer numbers. If such views are shared by the majority of programme coordinators in Europe, the policy discourse might be raising false expectations in this regard. Further investigation would, nevertheless, be needed.

9.2 Benefits of mobility windows

After having discussed the impact of windows on mobility numbers, we now look at the perceived impact of mobility windows on the programmes and institutions offering them, as well as on the participating students.

9.2.1 Benefits of mobility windows for the study programme and the institution

The perceived benefits of mobility windows for the programmes and institutions implementing them go hand in hand with the rationales for setting up the windows in the first place (see chapter 4). Just like the rationales, the perceived impact is often not specific to the windows themselves though, but applies to student mobility in general. In line with this finding, no major differences between the different types of windows could be discerned.

Multiplication

What many interviewees saw as a particularly positive outcome of implementing mobility windows is the gradual spread of this model internally. With time, other programmes within the institution became interested in setting up mobility windows, after they witnessed the success experienced by the frontrunner programmes, as one interviewee details:

“One advantage of the programme is that it affects other programmes and is an example. There is a growing interest to go abroad in other programmes that don’t have this kind of integrated mobility.”

Other interviewees expected additional, long-term multiplication effects. They hoped that some of the window-mobile students would remain within their home institutions, either as academic or administrative staff, and would become change agents, further promoting such mechanisms internally and thus enhancing internationalisation.

Quality boost

Many interviewees associated mobility windows with an automatic gain in quality for their programme. As the quote below illustrates, some programme

coordinators explicitly saw mobility windows as providing them with a form of assessment against their peers:

“The planning phase forced the programme representatives to analyse their own curriculum thoroughly and benchmark it against the partner’s curriculum. This was a benefit for the programme even if at the time it felt very laborious and difficult.”

Better international reputation

Very much associated with the idea of quality is the idea of reputational gains. Several coordinators were convinced that their partnership with colleagues at prestigious institutions provided a signal that they provided high-quality education. They further said that the window helped them to increase international visibility.

Internal change

For some institutions and programme managers, setting-up mobility windows brought about internal change that was seen as necessary. This applies to both curricular aspects, where reforms were previously attempted but met with strong internal opposition, as well as to administrative procedures facilitating mobility. Once the windows were in place, the respective aspects or services had to change to cope with the new realities.

Staff mobility

While mobile staff members are generally considered as mobility multipliers who set a positive example for future mobile students, it can also be the other way around, according to the interviewees. Student mobility in the framework of mobility windows can trigger staff mobility. In some programmes, e.g. in those not taught in the domestic language, this seemed to be absolutely necessary. Because of limited foreign-language capacity at home, such programmes had to rely on visiting professors (often coming from their window partners) to be able to develop foreign-language-taught programmes that implement mobility windows.

Closer cooperation

While many of the mobility windows analysed were developed as a result of the existing cooperation between the partner programmes, and more specifically between individuals (usually professors) within these programmes (chapter 5), mobility windows also generate further cooperation. Several of the programme coordinators mentioned that thanks to the initial interaction with their partners in the window framework, they developed new joint research projects and activities. This seems to have happened particularly in programmes with

Ma-Hip and Op-Hip windows, where closer cooperation is generally needed for curricular alignment. The mobility window is now, for many of them, only one of the cooperation activities they have with the window partner programmes. For a few of them, such cooperation even goes beyond the field of research and higher education, to other levels of education.

Beyond the institution: biggest impact is on students

Although specifically asked about the benefits of windows for the institution, many of the participating interviewees said that the biggest impact was actually on the personal development of the participating students. They were mostly referring to the impact of international mobility in general, rather than to the fact that the mobility experience was organised through a window. One interviewee specifically said that this experience “changes students for life”. Others mentioned that the experience “broadens the horizons” of students who “come back as more mature persons”.

The main impact was thus perceived to be at the individual level. However, institutions were also assumed to benefit from the fact students had gained new experiences and became more knowledgeable through their mobility experience. One programme coordinator reported that returning students usually became tutors or advisers for the non-mobile students, sharing with them the knowledge and new learning methods acquired abroad. In other words, they became the agents for ‘internationalisation at home’.

Most of the interviewed coordinators believed that the international experience gained by students would give them a competitive advantage on the labour market. One coordinator declared that “*mobility is one thing helping our students find a job after graduation [...]. Companies understand the value of this kind of education*”. Another stated that “[*students*] found jobs with explicit reference to their experiences and skills gained during the stay abroad”. This was apparently even more so when the mobility experience was further certified in the form of a double or joint degree, some of the graduates finding a job in their host country. The coordinators generally took this as evidence of the success and added value of their programmes, and implicitly of the mobility component.

9.2.2 Students’ perceptions – benefits of mobility (windows)

When asked about the impact of mobility windows, the participating students rarely saw themselves as having taken part in a mobility window. Some of the interviewed students (in joint degree programmes) even rejected the idea of referring to the mobility arrangements they experienced as windows. In their view, the entire programme was a window. Also, they thought that the notion of home and host institution did not really apply because the university where

they currently studied was not necessarily the one where they had started to study. They often started at one of the partner institutions.

Nevertheless, the students commented extensively on the impact of the mobility experience as such during the interviews. And interestingly, although they were often openly critical of their study programmes and several of them seemed to have encountered significant challenges when abroad, the students' evaluations on the impact of mobility were in general overwhelmingly positive.

The first mobility experience increased students 'appetite' for mobility. When interviewed, several of them were in their third mobility round. For other students, though, programmes with more than one mobility window seem to have created a 'mobility fatigue'. This was reported generally by students in joint degree programmes, where they were expected to move to another partner institution every semester. These students, many of whom were already coming from abroad, wanted more time to experience the local culture.

Similar to their programme coordinators, most students believed that the most tangible result of mobility was their personal development. Some students defined it as a growing-up experience, which taught them how to manage by themselves, as a result of which, they were not *"afraid of doing things outside [their] comfort zone"* any longer. They believed that the challenges they had encountered provided them with good lessons for life and helped them build their character.

The mobility experience challenged the self-esteem of some students. One student says that *"at home, I knew I was amongst the best"*, but *"once I arrived abroad, I was surrounded by the best, from all over Europe"*. This created some positive pressure on the student and helped her extend her limits.

Many students seemed convinced that the mobility experience would open up better employment opportunities. They believed that mobility *"looks good on the CV"*. This was confirmed by most of the graduates interviewed, who were convinced that this aspect did play a role in getting them a job (in some cases actually in the host country). Others were less convinced that international experience mattered greatly to employers. Yet another category thought that while mobility was certainly not the most important criterion for employers, it might still provide them with a competitive advantage over other students with similar qualifications but no international experience. A smaller group of students seemed to be well aware that as more and more students are becoming mobile, this competitive advantage will decrease over time. A last group did not think that employers value international experience too highly, particularly in some subject fields like law. Still, they thought mobility might be a good conversation starter in a job interview.

Another major mobility-related gain reported by students was increased language proficiency. This was seen as an important asset, especially in the case of more ‘exotic’ languages such as Chinese.

A last benefit mentioned by the students was the fact that they have built a “network abroad”. This was seen as very important, both for personal and later for professional reasons.

10. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: the ‘internationalisation community’ in Europe and elsewhere in the world is invited to discuss the proposed definition and typology of mobility windows.

One reason for undertaking the present study was that the usage of the term mobility window was lax and almost user-specific. This makes the policy discourse on mobility windows rather confusing. Aiming to streamline the policy discourse, this study has proposed a definition that differentiates window mobility from other forms of mobility by stressing the ‘curricular embeddedness’ of mobility windows as their defining characteristic.

The threshold for the minimum degree of ‘curricular embeddedness’ was set above the level that is common for ERASMUS mobility. Even though hard empirical evidence is in short supply, there are indications that ERASMUS mobility (and mobility in similarly structured programmes in some countries) makes up between 70 and 80% of all credit mobility in Europe (e.g. Teichler, Ferencz & Wächter, 2011). To lower the threshold for mobility windows and thus to include ERASMUS-type mobility would therefore have meant to open up the term to include almost all credit mobility in Europe. It is against this background that we invite the ‘internationalisation community’ in Europe and beyond to discuss, share, and adapt the proposed definition and the typology of mobility windows.

Recommendation 2: higher education institutions should develop institutional approaches to and partnerships for window mobility. They should set up institution-wide policies, rules and regulations for the introduction and operation of mobility windows, inclusive of compensation packages for those staff in charge of organising them (who are so far mostly ‘volunteers’).

Most windows owe their existence to the initiative of a single professor (and his or her counterpart in another country) or, at best, an institute or an academic department. We have found cases in which the institution as a whole benevolently supported these attempts. But we have extremely few cases where the window was the result of top-down approach (i.e. the initiative of a university’s leadership). At the same time, many of the successful mobility windows explored relied on both the enthusiasm of individual initiators and the internal institutional support translated into the efficient cooperation between multiple actors.

Therefore, we believe that the development of mobility windows has now reached a stage where the predominant bottom-up culture would largely ben-

efit from being complemented with institution-wide strategies. In addition, special attention has to be paid to creating stronger links between key actors at the institutional leadership, international administration and faculty levels. The design and maintenance of mobility windows based on study abroad periods that are clearly defined in terms of their place in the curriculum and content require strong intra-institutional partnerships tying internationalisation more closely with the curriculum development work.

Recommendation 3: higher education institutions are encouraged to explore the benefits of different types of mobility windows. They should pursue comprehensive internationalisation policies, of which outbound credit mobility in general, and window mobility in particular, should be key instruments – but by no means the only ones.

Institutions and programme managers are invited to explore the benefits of the proposed types of mobility windows and to identify those that would serve their purpose best. More systematic introduction of windows would help increase the so far low numbers of students using programmes with windows and would almost certainly lead to organisational economies of scale and peer learning. More specifically, this could help institutions take advantage of the potential academic added value of the structured curriculum with study abroad periods (as opposed to less structured types of mobility) and the more transparent, routinised and ‘smooth’ recognition procedures offered by mobility windows.

No doubt, mobility windows can be a valuable instrument in the wider arsenal of internationalisation tools. At the same time, this study has shown that they are a tool amongst many others, serving the needs of some, but not of all categories of students. Therefore, mobility windows should be offered in a healthy mix with other internationalisation instruments. Other means and forms than physical mobility of students may be used to internationalise higher education. It would therefore be essential for institutional strategies to explain the place, role and benefits of mobility windows amongst other tools for fostering internationalisation at the institutional level.

Recommendation 4: higher education institutions, national governments and the European Union should explore ways to ensure sustainability of mobility windows.

Much effort has been invested in the development and running of mobility windows over the last years. However, the funding horizons of many mobility windows are rather blurry in a longer outlook. It is therefore important to ensure that necessary mechanisms of support for mobility windows continue to be in place at the national and European levels. The sustainability of such

instruments of support is particularly important for structured programmes with embedded mobility windows as the latter often rely on long-standing partnerships and require higher investment of time and other resources. At the same time, it is also up to the institutions to make sure that their mobility windows keep going and stay tuned to the needs of students over the time.

Recommendation 5: national governments and the European Union should continue to work on the removal of obstacles to student mobility, because the quantitative contribution of window mobility might be limited.

We are convinced of the value of mobility windows. Yet our concern is that their quantitative contribution to overall levels of outgoing student mobility might remain limited, even if the present recommendations are fully implemented. It will therefore be of paramount importance to improve the conditions for other forms of organised mobility (as, for example, in ERASMUS), as well as for self-organised study abroad. This implies further efforts to reduce mobility obstacles are required in general.

Concluding remarks

The centrality of mobility windows in the European policy discourse stands in stark contrast to the numerical (in)significance of these forms of curricula-embedded international mobility. The figures related to the student participation in the researched mandatory and optional windows are rather modest indeed, at least in the programmes covered in this study. In this respect, the benefits of mobility windows seem to be at odds with the political intention mobility windows owe their existence to, namely the intention to considerably increase the volume of outbound credit-mobile students. Therefore, the focus of the discussions about the value and role of mobility windows should probably be shifted from quantitative political targets to broader aims and expected outcomes of internationalisation.

This study shows that while the design and operation of mobility windows is far more resource-intensive than for non-window mobility, the benefits students derive from window mobility do not appear to differ in any marked way from those known to typically result from international student mobility in general. However, the study also reveals that mobility windows seem to increase the overall likelihood that students reap the benefits of international student mobility, and, thus, improve students' chances of a successful mobility period. From this perspective, mobility windows, as opposed to less structured types, can offer excellent mobility experiences for students, and also create multiple benefits for institutions and programmes using this particular type of mobility.

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Annex I. Tips for making mobility windows work

Designing mobility windows

- develop a clear understanding of goals, i.e. what to achieve with a mobility window;
- identify the most appropriate type of partnership (e.g. one-way or multiple-way window);
- select a partner who shares similar education and/or institutional goals and who would be prepared to commit comparable staff and financial resources;
- before approaching potential partners, make sure the necessary support (in terms of agreement from superior levels and both financial and staff resources) is in place to start a mobility window and to keep it running;
- identify sustainable solutions for funding a mobility window, i.e. look for new funding opportunities before existing funding runs out; and
- identify the most appropriate time period for the study abroad period (when students are expected go abroad and for how long);
- clarify the status of a window (mandatory or optional) and elaborate guidelines specifying the nature of content offered abroad (study or internship; loosely or highly prescribed content; type of studies, etc.);
- consult about the nature of a mobility window with other programme coordinators, the international office and institutional leadership;
- decide on a recognition method; create a grade conversion system and policy to deal with potential cases where students fail to fulfil study requirements; and
- cooperate with the examinations office while sending students abroad in order to ensure smooth recognition on their return.

Running mobility windows

- inform your potentially mobile students about benefits and costs, as well as opportunities and obligations resulting from the participation in window mobility;

- use a broad range of diversified student-centred information channels to advertise mobility windows – use social media and actively involve the ‘alumni’ of your mobility windows in information dissemination activities and events;
- provide students who have decided to go abroad with the timely information about the *modus operandi* of the mobility window, such as important deadlines, application and recognition procedures, and practical issues (accommodation, financing) and share this knowledge with students (e.g. online or in form of a handbook);
- promise students only what you can deliver;
- help students secure funding for window mobility;
- draw on mobile students’ experiences by gathering their feedback and using students as the ambassadors of your programme/window; and
- collect information about the partners and keep track of the content of studies pursued by students at partner institutions (e.g. in form of a database).

Annex II. List of researched study programmes

N° of programme in the publication	1
Country	Germany
Name of the institution	Hochschule Hannover (HsH)
Name of the programme in the publication	Hannover Bachelor Plus+ China
Full programme name/field of study	BACHELOR PLUS+ of Faculty I (Electrical Engineering and Information Technology)
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	4 years (8 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Loosely prescribed content' (Op-Lop) for study and internship
Time of the window/s	Semesters 6 and 7
Length of mobility window	1 year (2 semesters)
Number of foreign partners	1 (Zhejiang University of Science and Technology - ZUST)
Number of "window mobile" students	5 students in the academic year 2012/2013
Additional remarks	Students decide until the third semester whether to follow the regular programme (6 semesters) or take part in the BACHELOR PLUS+ programme (8 semesters).

N° of programme in the publication	2
Country	Germany
Name of the institution	Hochschule Hannover (HsH)
Name of the programme in the publication	Hannover Bachelor in Mech. Eng.
Full programme name / field of study	Double Degree in Mechanical Engineering
Level of the programme	Bachelor

Duration of the programme	2 years (8 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Loosely prescribed content' (Op-Lop) for study, internship and thesis writing
Time of the window/s	Semesters 7 and 8
Length of mobility window	1 year (2 semesters)
Number of foreign partners	3
Number of "window mobile" students	11 slots available every year
Additional remarks	Students choose between the regular programme (7 semesters) and the double degree track (8 semesters) during studies.

N° of programme in the publication	3
Country	Germany
Name of the institution	Universität Vechta
Name of the programme in the publication	Vechta Bachelor Brazil
Full programme name/field of study	Study abroad semester at the Universidade Federal de Paraíba (UFPB)
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	6 semesters
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Loosely prescribed content' (Op-Lop) for study and internship
Time of the window/s	Semester 5
Length of mobility window	1 semester
Number of foreign partners	1 (Universidade Federal de Paraíba – UFPB)
Number of "window mobile" students	5-10 students usually go to UFPB
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	4
Country	Germany
Name of the institution	Universität Vechta
Name of the programme in the publication	Vechta Bachelor in Gerontology
Full programme name/field of study	Bachelor in Gerontology
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	6 semesters
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Loosely prescribed content' (Op-Lop) for study and/or internship
Time of the window/s	Semester 5
Length of mobility window	Usually 1 semester (with option to extend the window)
Number of foreign partners	4
Number of "window mobile" students	About 10% of the students take up the mobility window option
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	5
Country	Germany
Name of the institution	International School of Management (ISM)
Name of the programme in the publication	Dortmund Int. School of Management
Full programme name/field of study	B.A. in International Management B.A. in Tourism & Event Management B.A. in Communication & Marketing B.A. in Corporate Finance B.A. in Psychology & Management B.A. in Global Brand & Fashion Management
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	6 semesters with one mobility window 7 semesters with two mobility windows
Number of mobility windows	2

Type and purpose of mobility window	1st window: 'Mandatory window-Loosely prescribed content' (Ma-Lop) for study 2nd window: 'Optional window-Loosely prescribed content' (Op-Lop)
Time of the window/s	Semesters 4 and 7
Length of mobility window	Each time one semester
Number of foreign partners	About 150 partners
Number of "window mobile" students	All students have to spend at least 1 semester abroad.
Additional remarks	The structure in all Bachelor's degree programmes at ISM Dortmund is as follows: students decide until the fifth semester whether to follow the "European Track" (6 semesters, mobility window in the 4 semester) or the "Global Track" (7 semesters, mobility windows in the 4th and 7th semesters).

N° of programme in the publication	6
Country	Germany
Name of the institution	Leibniz Universität Hannover (LUH)
Name of the programme in the publication	Leibniz Economic Geography
Full programme name/field of study	Wirtschaftsgeographie (Economic Geography)
Level of the programme	Master's
Duration of the programme	2 years (4 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Loosely prescribed content' (Op-Lop) for study
Time of the window/s	Semester 3
Length of mobility window	1 semester
Number of foreign partners	11
Number of "window mobile" students	About 50% of the students

Additional remarks	All students have to go abroad either in the form of studies abroad or in the context of a study project involving an international field trip of several weeks.
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N° of programme in the publication	7
Country	Italy
Name of the institution	Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali (LUISS)
Name of the programme in the publication	LUISS MSc in Management – EBS
Full programme name/field of study	Double Degree LUISS – EBS General Management
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	2 years (4 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Mandatory window-Highly prescribed content' (Ma-Hip) for study
Time of the window/s	Semesters 1 and 2
Length of mobility window	1 year
Number of foreign partners	1 (European Business School – EBS)
Number of “window mobile” students	2 slots available
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	8
Country	Italy
Name of the institution	Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali (LUISS)
Name of the programme in the publication	LUISS MSc in Management – Fudan
Full programme name/field of study	DDIM – Double Degree in International Management
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	2 years (4 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Mandatory window-Highly prescribed content' (Ma-Hip) for study

Time of the window/s	Semesters 1 and 2
Length of mobility window	1 year (2 semesters)
Number of foreign partners	1 (Fudan School of Management, Shanghai)
Number of “window mobile” students	15 slots available
Additional remarks	Campus Italo-Cinese consists of students of Fudan School of Management, Bocconi University and LUISS.

N° of programme in the publication	9
Country	Italy
Name of the institution	Università degli Studi di Camerino (UNICAM)
Name of the programme in the publication	UNICAM MSc in Chemistry
Full programme name/field of study	Double Degree in Chemistry and Advanced Chemical Methodologies
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	2 years (4 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	‘Optional window-Loosely prescribed content’ (Op-Lop) for study
Time of the window/s	Semesters 3 and/or 4
Length of mobility window	1 Semester with option to extend mobility to 2 semesters
Number of foreign partners	1 (Instituto Superior Técnico IST, Lisbon)
Number of “window mobile” students	8 students in the academic year 2011/2012 6 students in the academic year 2012/2013
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	10
Country	Italy
Name of the institution	Università degli Studi di Camerino (UNICAM)
Name of the programme in the publication	UNICAM MSc in Computer Science
Full programme name/field of study	Computer Science
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	2 years (4 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Loosely prescribed content' (Op-Lop) for study
Time of the window/s	Semesters 3 and/or 4
Length of mobility window	1 to 2 Semesters
Number of foreign partners	2
Number of "window mobile" students	20-25% of the students take up the Double Degree opportunity
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	11
Country	Italy
Name of the institution	Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
Name of the programme in the publication	Ca' Foscari BSc in Economics and Management
Full programme name/field of study	Economics and Management
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	4 years
Number of mobility windows	2
Type and purpose of mobility window	1st window: 'Mandatory window-Loosely prescribed content' (Ma-Lop) for study 2nd window: 'Mandatory window-Loosely prescribed content' (Ma-Lop) for study
Time of the window/s	1st window: Semesters 5 and 6 2nd window: Flexible

Length of mobility window	1st window: 2 Semesters 2nd window: 1 Semester
Number of foreign partners	2
Number of “window mobile” students	18 slots available
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	12
Country	Finland
Name of the institution	Lahti University of Applied Science
Name of the programme in the publication	Lahti Bachelor in Nursing
Full programme name/field of study	Lahti University of Applied Sciences Bachelor Degree Programme in Nursing
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	7 semesters
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	‘Optional window-Highly prescribed content’ (Op-Hip) for study
Time of the window/s	Optional
Length of mobility window	15 ECTS
Number of foreign partners	1 (university in Denmark)
Number of “window mobile” students	1-3 students per year
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	13
Country	Finland
Name of the institution	Oulu University of Applied Science
Name of the programme in the publication	Oulu BSc in Business IT
Full programme name/field of study	Oulu University of Applied Science Bachelor Degree Programme in Business Information Technology
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	7 semesters
Number of mobility windows	1

Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Highly prescribed content' (Op-Hip) for study
Time of the window/s	Semesters 5 and 6
Length of mobility window	2 semesters
Number of foreign partners	1 (Neu-Ulm University in Germany)
Number of "window mobile" students	5 students per year
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	14
Country	Finland
Name of the institution	Tampere University of Applied Science
Name of the programme in the publication	Tampere BBA in Int. Business
Full programme name/field of study	Tampere University of Applied Science, Bachelor Degree Programme in International Business
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	7 semesters
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Mandatory window-Loosely prescribed content' (Ma-Lop) for study
Time of the window/s	Semester 5
Length of mobility window	1 semester (30 ECTS)
Number of foreign partners	Many
Number of "window mobile" students	–
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	15 (a and b)
Country	Finland
Name of the institution	University of Helsinki
Name of the programme in the publication	Helsinki Msc EMFOL (Food of Life)
Full programme name/field of study	University of Helsinki, Food of Life Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree Programme
Level of the programme	Master

Duration of the programme	4 semesters
Number of mobility windows	2
Type and purpose of mobility window	15a – ‘Mandatory window-Highly prescribed content’ (Ma-Hip) for study 15b – ‘Optional window-Loosely prescribed content’ (Op-Lop) for study or thesis
Time of the window/s	15 a – semesters 3 and 4 15 b – semester 3 and 4
Length of mobility window	15a – 2 semesters 15b – 3 months
Number of foreign partners	15a – 3 15b – 2
Number of “window mobile” students	15a – approx. 10 students 15b – 2 students in the academic year 2011-12
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	16
Country	Finland
Name of the institution	University of Turku
Name of the programme in the publication	Turku Master’s BSRS (Baltic Sea)
Full programme name/field of study	University of Turku, Master’s Degree Programme in Baltic Sea Region Studies
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	4 semesters
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	‘Mandatory window-Loosely prescribed content’ (Ma-Lop) for study
Time of the window/s	Semester 3
Length of mobility window	1 semester
Number of foreign partners	4
Number of “window mobile” students	Approx. 10 students per year
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	17
Country	Finland
Name of the institution	University of Turku
Name of the programme in the publication	Turku Master's Euromachs
Full programme name/field of study	University of Turku, Master's Degree Programme in European Heritage, Digital Media and Information Society
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	4 semesters
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Mandatory window-Highly prescribed content' (Ma-Hip) for study
Time of the window/s	Semester 2
Length of mobility window	1 semester
Number of foreign partners	4
Number of "window mobile" students	–
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	18
Country	Romania
Name of the institution	University of Bucharest
Name of the programme in the publication	UNIBUC BA in Social Work
Full programme name/field of study	University of Bucharest, Bachelor Degree Programme in Psychology and Social Work (double degree)
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	3 years (6 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Highly prescribed content' (Op-Hip) mixed – for study and internship
Time of the window/s	Semesters 5 and 6
Length of mobility window	2 semesters
Number of foreign partners	1 (Via University College, Denmark)

Number of “window mobile” students	8 slots available
Additional remarks	This programme was in piloting stage and is trilateral in nature – it is a cooperation between two faculties of the University of Bucharest and the Via University College. Students choose between the regular programme and the double degree track in their fourth semester of studies.

N° of programme in the publication	19
Country	Romania
Name of the institution	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași
Name of the programme in the publication	UAIC MSc in Finances
Full programme name/field of study	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Master’s Degree Programme in Finances and Risk Management (double degree)
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	2 years (4 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	‘Optional window-Highly prescribed content’ (Op-Hip) for study
Time of the window/s	Semesters 3 and 4
Length of mobility window	2 semesters
Number of foreign partners	1 (University of Groningen)
Number of “window mobile” students	Max. 10 slots per year – on average 4 students go to the partner institution yearly.
Additional remarks	Students choose between the regular programme and the double degree track in their 2nd semester of studies.

N° of programme in the publication	20
Country	Romania
Name of the institution	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași
Name of the programme in the publication	UAIC MSc in Statistics
Full programme name/field of study	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Master's Degree Programme in Statistics in Health Insurance
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	2 years (4 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Highly prescribed content' (Op-Hip) mixed – for study and internship
Time of the window/s	Variable – the students can spend up to 3 semesters in the partner university.
Length of mobility window	Variable – min. 1 semester – max. 3 semesters
Number of foreign partners	1 – University of Poitiers
Number of “window mobile” students	Approx. 5 students per year (i.e. approx. 20% of students in the programme)
Additional remarks	The curricula of the 2 programmes (the Romanian and the French one) are almost identical, which makes it possible to have this degree of flexibility as to when students can go to the partner institution. 1 semester of internship abroad is mandatory.

N° of programme in the publication	21
Country	Romania
Name of the institution	Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Name of the programme in the publication	UBB MA in Political Studies
Full programme name/field of study	Babeş-Bolyai University, Joint Master's Degree Programme in Comparative European Political Studies: Germany and Eastern Europe (double degree)
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	2 years (4 semesters)
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Highly prescribed content' (Op-Hip) for study
Time of the window/s	3rd semester – potentially extended to the 4th semester
Length of mobility window	1 or 2 semesters
Number of foreign partners	1 – University of Magdeburg
Number of “window mobile” students	Approx. 2 students per year (about 15% of students in the programme) – more can go, but do not receive scholarships.
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	22
Country	Romania
Name of the institution	Technical University of Construction, Bucharest
Name of the programme in the publication	UTCB MSc in Civil Eng.
Full programme name/field of study	Technical University of Construction, Master's Degree Programme in Civil Engineering
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	Variable – 2,5 or 3,5 years, depending on the option taken by students
Number of mobility windows	1

Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Highly prescribed content' (Op-Hip) mixed – for study and internship
Time of the window/s	From the 1st semester of studies onwards
Length of mobility window	– 2 years (4 semesters) if students opt for the 'short' internship, with a duration of 3 months (this means year 1 study abroad, 3 months internship abroad during the summer break, year 2 study abroad) – 3 years (6 semesters) if students opt for the 'long' internship, with a duration of 1 year (this means year 1 study abroad, year 2 internship abroad, year 3 study abroad)
Number of foreign partners	1 – Ecole des Ponts et des Chaussées
Number of "window mobile" students	4 students in the latest year
Additional remarks	At the end of the 'window' period, students must take one semester of study at the home institution before graduating.

N° of programme in the publication	23
Country	The Netherlands
Name of the institution	University of Groningen
Name of the programme in the publication	Groningen BSc in Business
Full programme name/field of study	University of Groningen, BSc Bedrijfskunde (Business Administration)
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	3 years
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Highly prescribed content' (Op-Hip) for study
Time of the window/s	Semester 5
Length of mobility window	1 semester (30 ECTS)
Number of foreign partners	140

Number of “window mobile” students	–
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	24
Country	The Netherlands
Name of the institution	University of Groningen
Name of the programme in the publication	Groningen BSc in Int. Business
Full programme name/field of study	University of Groningen, BSc International Business
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	3 years
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	‘Mandatory window-Highly prescribed content’ (Ma-Hip) for study
Time of the window/s	Semesters 1 and 2
Length of mobility window	1 semester (30 ECTS)
Number of foreign partners	140
Number of “window mobile” students	–
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	25
Country	The Netherlands
Name of the institution	University of Groningen
Name of the programme in the publication	Groningen BSc in Econometrics
Full programme name/field of study	University of Groningen, BSc Econometrics and Operations Research
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	3 years
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	‘Optional window-Loosely prescribed content’ (Op-Lop) for study
Time of the window/s	Semester 5 or 6
Length of mobility window	1 semester

Number of foreign partners	140
Number of “window mobile” students	–
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	26 (a and b)
Country	The Netherlands
Name of the institution	University of Groningen
Name of the programme in the publication	Groningen BSc in Economics
Full programme name/field of study	University of Groningen, BSc Economics and Business Economics
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	3 years
Number of mobility windows	2
Type and purpose of mobility window	26a – ‘Mandatory window-Highly prescribed content’ (Ma-Hip) for study 26b – ‘Optional window – Loosely prescribed content’ (Op-Lop) for study
Time of the window/s	Semester 5
Length of mobility window	1 semester
Number of foreign partners	140
Number of “window mobile” students	–
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	27 (a, b and c)
Country	The Netherlands
Name of the institution	University of Groningen
Name of the programme in the publication	Groningen EM MSc CEMACUBE (Biomed. Eng.)
Full programme name/field of study	University of Groningen, Erasmus Mundus Common European Master's Course in Biomedical Engineering (CEMACUBE)
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	2 years
Number of mobility windows	3

Type and purpose of mobility window	27a – ‘Mandatory window-Highly prescribed content’ (Ma-Hip) for study 27b – ‘Optional window-Highly prescribed content’ (Op-Hip) for study 27c – ‘Optional window – Loosely prescribed content’ (Op-Lop) for internship
Time of the window/s	Semester 3
Length of mobility window	27a – 1 semester 27b – 1 semester 27c – 15 ECTS
Number of foreign partners	8
Number of “window mobile” students	–
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	28 (a, b and c)
Country	The Netherlands
Name of the institution	University of Groningen
Name of the programme in the publication	Groningen EM MA Euroculture
Full programme name/field of study	University of Groningen, Erasmus Mundus MA Euroculture
Level of the programme	Master
Duration of the programme	2 years
Number of mobility windows	3
Type and purpose of mobility window	28a – ‘Mandatory window-Highly prescribed content’ (Ma-Hip) for study 28b – ‘Optional window-Highly prescribed content’ (Op-Hip) for study 28c – ‘Optional window – Loosely prescribed content’ (Op-Lop) for internship
Time of the window/s	28a – semester 2 28b – semester 3 28c – semester 4
Length of mobility window	28a – 1 semester 28b – 1-2 semesters 28c – 1-2 semesters
Number of foreign partners	11
Number of “window mobile” students	– (and no Additional remarks)

N° of programme in the publication	29 (a, b and c)
Country	The Netherlands
Name of the institution	Saxion University of Applied Sciences
Name of the programme in the publication	Saxion BBA Toursim Management
Full programme name/field of study	Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Bachelor in Tourism Management
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	4 years
Number of mobility windows	3
Type and purpose of mobility window	29a – ‘Mandatory window-Highly pre-prescribed content’ (Ma-Hip) for internship 29b – ‘Optional window – Loosely prescribed content’ (Op-Lop) for study and/or internship 29c – ‘Optional window-Loosely pre-prescribed content’ (Op-Lop) for study and/or internship
Time of the window/s	29a – year 2 29b – year 3 or 4 29c – year 4
Length of mobility window	5 months for each
Number of foreign partners	About 30 institutions for study abroad and 300 companies for internships abroad
Number of “window mobile” students	All students have to spend at least 1 semester (30 ECTS) abroad. The programme enrolls approx. 970 students in total: 360 of them in the English ‘pathway’ and 610 in the Dutch ‘pathway’.
Additional remarks	Many students go abroad through more than one window (many about once a year in years 2-4).

N° of programme in the publication	30
Country	The Netherlands
Name of the institution	University College Utrecht
Name of the programme in the publication	UCU in Africa
Full programme name/field of study	University College Utrecht in Africa
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	4 years
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Highly prescribed content' (Op-Hip) for internship
Time of the window/s	Summer break after the second or third year
Length of mobility window	3 months
Number of foreign partners	Several African NGOs
Number of "window mobile" students	25 places per year
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	31
Country	The Netherlands
Name of the institution	University College Utrecht
Name of the programme in the publication	UCU China
Full programme name/field of study	University College Utrecht – China Program in Humanities
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	4 years
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Highly prescribed content' (Op-Hip) for study
Time of the window/s	Semester 3 or 5
Length of mobility window	1 semester
Number of foreign partners	1
Number of "window mobile" students	About 10 students per year
Additional remarks	–

N° of programme in the publication	32
Country	The Netherlands
Name of the institution	University College Utrecht
Name of the programme in the publication	UCU Transnational Law
Full programme name/field of study	University College Utrecht – Transnational law (USA)
Level of the programme	Bachelor
Duration of the programme	4 years
Number of mobility windows	1
Type and purpose of mobility window	'Optional window-Highly prescribed content' (Op-Hip) for study
Time of the window/s	Semester 5
Length of mobility window	4 months
Number of foreign partners	1
Number of "window mobile" students	–
Additional remarks	–

Annex III. Biographies of the project team

Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)

Irina Ferencz

Irina Ferencz is Policy Officer at the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA). Since her start at ACA, in 2008, she has been mainly involved in projects and activities related to the use of indicators for measuring internationalisation at university level and has authored several publications and articles on international student mobility, on both statistical and policy trends. Examples of recent publications she co-authored are the studies *Mapping mobility in European higher education* (previously referred to as EURODATA II) of 2011 and the 2012 *European and national policies for academic mobility. Linking rhetoric, practice and mobility trends*. Irina was the coordinator of the MOWIN Project at ACA. Irina has also been in charge of the development of several ACA European Policy Seminars. Irina, who is a Romanian national, studied International Relations and European Studies at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca and obtained a Master's degree in European Politics and Policies at the Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven. She is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Kassel, Germany.

Veronika Kupriyanova

Veronika Kupriyanova is Project Officer at ACA. Veronika has been involved in the MOWIN project and the ACA monthly newsletter. A political scientist by training, Veronika started her career path with two internships at the International Trade Center UNCTAD-WTO and the World Bank. Between 2007 and 2011, she worked as Policy Officer for Science and Technology at the EU Delegation to Russia. A Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung's German Chancellor Programme for prospective leaders from USA, Russia and China, Veronika spent a year at the Humboldt University in Berlin where she conducted research on higher education internationalisation and contributed to the work of the international office. Veronika holds a joint Master's degree in International Relations from the Moscow State University for International Relations (MGIMO) and Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po). She is currently a PhD researcher at the Department of Educational Sciences of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium.

Queenie K.H. Lam

Queenie Lam joined ACA as Project Officer in late 2010. Since then, she has been involved in a number of research projects and the production of ACA events and the monthly newsletter. Queenie started her career as Executive

Officer at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2004-08), where she was first involved in the international recruitment of academic staff, and later in the development of international academic partnerships. Before joining ACA, her immediate past position was Research Assistant at the International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER) and the International Study Center of the University of Kassel. Queenie holds an MA in International Higher Education Research and Development from INCHER, Kassel (2012) and an MPhil in Communication from The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2006).

Bernd Wächter

Bernd Wächter is the Director of the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA). He studied at the universities of Hull (UK), Giessen and Marburg (Germany). His career has been focused on international higher education. He worked for the University of Kassel, the British Council, and the Fachhochschule Darmstadt, before joining The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) as the head of their EU division. He subsequently became the director for Higher Education (Erasmus) in the Brussels Socrates Office. In 1998, he took up his present post as ACA Director. Bernd Wächter has published and lectured widely on international higher education. He is the editor of the ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education. He has been the team leader of ACA's research projects and speaks frequently at major governmental and stakeholder conferences, in Europe and beyond, on the issue of mobility and internationalisation.

Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung (DZHW, formerly HIS-HF)

Christoph Gwosć

Christoph Gwosć studied Public Finance and Economic Policy at the Gerhard-Mercator-University of Duisburg, where he graduated with a Master of Economics in 1999. From 1999 to 2005, he worked as a researcher at the Institute for European Economic and Social Policy at the University of Duisburg-Essen. During this time, he also had several research periods and teaching assignments at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the USA, the University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf and the Warsaw School of Economics. From 2005 to 2006, he had lectureships for International Business, Microeconomics and European Economic Policy at Jacksonville University, Florida, and the Carinthia University of Applied Sciences in Austria. Since 2007, Christoph Gwosć has been working as researcher at the DZHW (formerly HIS-HF). He has been involved in various national and international

empirical projects, including the EUROSTUDENT project. Alongside his work at HIS, he is assistant lecturer for Economics at the Zeppelin-University Friedrichshafen.

Kristina Hauschildt

Kristina Hauschildt joined the DZHW (formerly HIS-HF) as a researcher in 2011. Her main areas of work include the evaluation of policy and practice in various areas of higher education, ranging from student drop-out to the impact of student fees on the quality of higher education provision. She was also part of the TRACKIT project, which compared European practices of student and graduate tracking. In 2010 Kristina was awarded a doctorate in work and organisational psychology by the University of Kiel, Germany. She graduated from the same university with a diploma in psychology in 2007. During her studies, she spent periods of her research at universities in the UK and Portugal.

Jeanette Ihnen

Jeanette Ihnen has been working as a student assistant at DZHW (formerly HIS-HF) since April 2011. She was a part of the EUROSTUDENT IV project team and is currently involved in the fifth round of the project. Jeanette supported the MOWIN project by organising a project meeting in Hannover as well as participating in the site visits in Germany. Jeanette is currently enrolled in a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology at Fern Universität Hagen.

Nicolai Netz

Nicolai Netz studied modern languages, cultural science, political science as well as economics at the Universities of Bonn, Florence and Maastricht. In 2008, he graduated from the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance with a Master's degree in Public Policy and Human Development. After a short stay at the German Research Institute for Public Administration in Speyer, he joined the DZHW (formerly HIS-HF) in Hannover as a researcher. At the DZHW, he has mainly been working on internationally comparative projects examining the mobility of students in Europe (e.g. EUROSTUDENT IV, Steeplechase and EURODATA II). Nicolai is currently pursuing a doctorate at Humboldt University Berlin. His research examines the access to and outcomes of international mobility during the studies.

Dominic Orr

Dominic Orr is a senior researcher at the DZHW (formerly HIS-HF) in Hannover. He graduated from Southbank University London in the field of applied

business studies and holds a PhD in the field of comparative education from Dresden University. Since 2005, he has been the head of the international co-ordination team of the EUROSTUDENT project, a large-scale project collating comparable data from 25 countries on the social and economic conditions of students in European higher education. Since 2008, he has been a member of three expert circles of the Bologna Follow-Up Group on reporting, mobility and the social dimension. His range of publications covers the fields of governance in higher education, student life and the social dimension as well as the international mobility of students. Publications, in which he was recently involved, include Orr/Gwosc/Netz (2011): *Social and economic conditions of student life in Europe* and Eurydice (2012): *The Bologna Process Implementation Report*.

Hendrik Schirmer

Hendrik Schirmer joined the DZHW (formerly HIS-HF) in 2011 as a student assistant and has since been involved in the EUROSTUDENT and MOWIN projects. Hendrik is currently enrolled in a Bachelor's degree in political science at the Leibniz University Hannover. Prior to his studies, Hendrik worked with children with special needs during his social service and spent two formative summers travelling through Kenya.

Centre for International Mobility (CIMO)

Irma Garam

Irma Garam is Research Manager in CIMO's (Centre for International Mobility) Information Services. She works in the study, evaluation and analysis team and is responsible for information on internationalisation of higher education. Irma has authored several studies and reports on internationalisation of higher education in Finland: e.g. *Internationality as part of higher education studies* (2012) and *Degree programmes taught through a foreign language in Finnish higher education* (2009). She has participated in international research projects on international mobility including a project called *Living and learning – exchange studies abroad. A study of motives, barriers and experiences of Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish students* (2013). Irma is responsible for the annual statistical analysis of international student mobility flows in Finnish higher education. She has also been part of the team nominated by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council to deal with the evaluation of international degree programmes.

What is ACA?

Founded in 1993, the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) is a not-for-profit pan-European network of major organisations responsible in their countries for the promotion of internationalisation in education and training. Current membership is comprised of 24 such organisations in 17 European countries, as well as associate members from the Americas and Australia. ACA's secretariat is located in Brussels, Belgium, in easy reach of the European institutions.

ACA is active in the following fields

- ◆ The promotion of innovation and internationalisation in (higher) education and training;
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- ◆ Research into and publications on internationalisation in education and training;
- ◆ The provision of know-how and expertise in the management of international cooperation projects and programmes;
- ◆ Contract work for third parties.

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Over the past decade, the notion of mobility windows has become highly relevant for the European policy discourse and student mobility practices. In the current European policy context, mobility windows are mostly viewed as an instrument to achieve ambitious mobility targets in the Bologna context. However, despite the frequent use of the term and the associated hopes, no shared understanding of the concept of mobility windows has emerged in the European higher education community. What exactly are mobility windows? What makes them different from other types of international student mobility? Are there different types of mobility windows? How can mobility windows be integrated into study programmes? What is the impact and value of mobility windows for institutions and mobile students? These are some of the main questions explored in the present study. This publication was produced by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) in close cooperation with the Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung (DZHW) based in Germany and the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) based in Finland. Financial support was granted by the European Commission. The study brings forward a new conceptual framework for the analysis of mobility windows and offers insight into the effective design and management of mobility windows.

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