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Celebrating 25 years of **ERASMUS**



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**ERASMUS
BUILDING ON
SUCCESS**

Anniversaries are a time for reflecting on the past and looking to the future.

When EU Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou launched the Erasmus 25th anniversary celebrations in January 2012, there was plenty to look back on. To date, three million students have taken part in Erasmus mobility. The Programme has facilitated new higher education curricula and innovative approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. And it kicked off and underpinned the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which ensures that study credits are comparable and portable across borders.

But the 66 Erasmus student and staff ambassadors also wanted to move the programme on. So they used the launch conference in Brussels to work on an Erasmus Manifesto which sets out 10 points for action (see pages 70-73). From 2014 onwards, the new Erasmus+ Programme will help to meet these aims and ensure that it continues to evolve in line with the needs of society. In this way, it will remain relevant to young people, higher education institutions and employers throughout Europe in years to come.

In this brochure those same Erasmus student and staff ambassadors share their experiences of the Programme, how the 25th anniversary was marked in their country and, as the launch date of the new Programme fast approaches, their hopes for its future.

BELGIUM



ERASMUS: NOT A YEAR IN A LIFE,

A refurbished warehouse next to a Brussels canal was the venue for a special Erasmus Day organised by AEF-Europe, the Belgian French-speaking national agency.

Quality issues were to the fore. A panel discussion centred on *'how to get the institutional actors of mobility more involved and valorise their work.'* Previously held workshops had produced a *'mind map'* of seven main issues, explains AEF-Europe's Catherine Devlamminck. Two of them had policy aspects, and a Memorandum on both of these was submitted for approval to 50 representatives of the higher education sector. It was then presented to the Minister of Higher Education.

Also on the programme for the evening were a pop concert, an improvisation show based on Erasmus experiences and a prize-giving for winners of the Erasmus 25 photo and video competition.

In Flanders, the Dutch-speaking agency EPOS held a special academic session at the University of Ghent. *'It took a look at the past, the present and the future of the programme,'* says Jan Ceulemans at EPOS.

Two studies were presented. PRIME 2010, by the Erasmus Student Network, looked at 'problems of recognition when marking Erasmus.' Ceulemans thinks the recognition of study credits is *'still a problem to a certain extent in Flanders, judging by what students report when they return from a mobility period.'* The second study, by Educonsult, was about *'Flemish indicators for Erasmus.'*

All in all, the Belgian events had a considerable media impact. Staff ambassador Hugo Marquant and student ambassador Marc Goffart both gave radio and TV interviews, and one major Flemish magazine even brought out a special Erasmus issue.

Programme for the future

The EU's image has been *'positively influenced'* by Erasmus, says Goffart. *'It makes people realise that the European Union is not only about politics and the economy, but has an impact on daily life.'* In future, the programme *'should not be only about geographical mobility but also about social mobility,'* he argues. *'It should offer students a chance to get a foot on the social ladder, and the financial barriers should not be too high a hurdle for students to take.'*



BUT A WHOLE LIFE IN A YEAR

'Erasmus is the EU's most successful programme,' emphasises Marquant, 'and the most important reason for that success is the involvement of young people. It's a programme for the future.' But he sees *'institutional recognition of staff mobility'* as a major unmet need. *'For instance, if a Belgian teacher goes to Spain for a few weeks to teach within a regular programme, that should be recognised as part of his or her teaching hours back in Belgium.'*

Mentality or identity?

'We often tend to talk about Erasmus in terms of figures,' points out Jan Ceulemans, *'but we should also take a very close look at the quality of mobilities. Erasmus intensive programmes are a good way for teachers to cooperate, and we hope this kind of activity will still be supported under the new programme. Teachers should be given elements for setting up qualitative cooperation on mobility.'*

He notes the conclusion drawn by a doctoral thesis, soon to be presented in Flanders, is that the main impact of Erasmus is on participants' personal mindsets rather than the construction of a European identity. *'It's more about creating a mentality than creating an identity.'*

A life in a year

An Erasmus stay *'is definitely seen as added value for any CV,'* says Catherine Devlamminck. *'Numerous students report having found a job thanks to their placement abroad.'* But it is also *'an unforgettable experience. As one of our coordinators put it, an Erasmus stay is not a year in a life, but a whole life in a year.'*





BULGARIA

BUILDING AN ERASMUS CULTURE

Erasmus has had *'a great impact'* on internationalisation strategies and quality control in Bulgarian higher education. So says Savena Borisova at the country's Human Resource Development Centre. In particular, the programme has brought *'innovative teaching methods, student services and new partnerships for curriculum development and various joint projects'*.

Bulgaria's celebrations ranged from special publications to competitions featuring videos, essays, posters, photos and stories. An anniversary show saw former Erasmus students performing alongside professional musicians and actors, and the annual university holiday was devoted to publicising Erasmus.

From an adventure to a must-do

'What has changed, for the better, is the level of public awareness about Erasmus,' says student ambassador Boryana Klinkova. *'Twenty-five years ago only a few students went abroad, and they were real adventurers! Nowadays, it has become a logical extension of the higher education process.'*

She should know. Klinkova now works as an international programme coordinator for students – but not in Bulgaria. She is based at a German university. *'I might be a Bulgarian Erasmus ambassador, but I think it's important to promote the programme wherever we are. So I've organised many information meetings and other activities to awaken Germany students' interest in Erasmus.'*

Back in Bulgaria, she marked the event with interviews on the radio and in the local and national press. And from Germany, she held a video conference with her former home university during the Erasmus day there.

Teaching staff reassured

A YouTube interview was among staff ambassador Romyana Todorova's promotional activities during 2012. Freshly back from discussions in Brussels, she also held a special seminar about the future plans for Erasmus. She feels the programme has reassured Bulgarian teaching staff at a time of great change. *'We have been able to see for ourselves that what we have been doing so far is in unison with colleagues in other European universities.'*



ЗА ТЕБ И МЕН

ДА ПОГЛЕДНЕМ СВЕТА ОТ ДРУГЪ ГЪЛ!

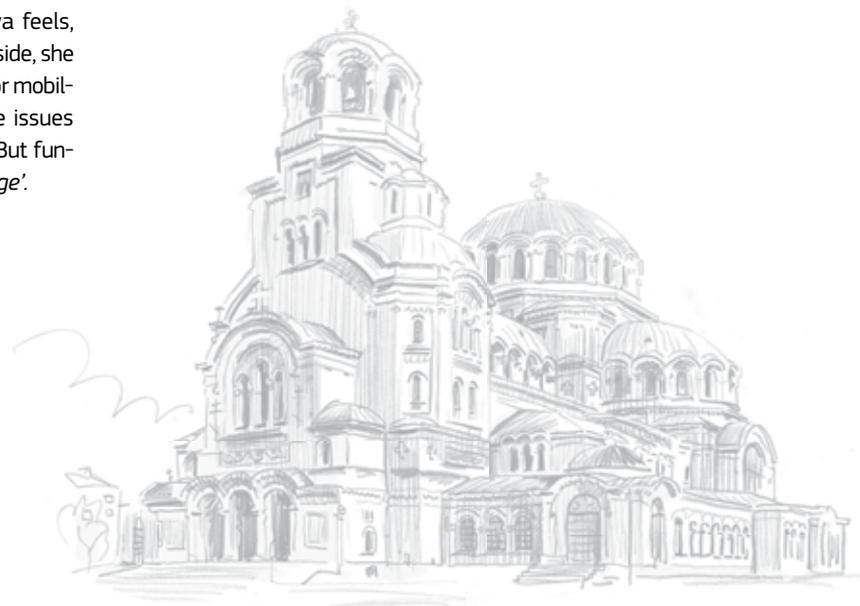


Erasmus *'is great – and it will be even greater,'* she believes. *'It will help to shape public attitudes nationwide.'* Looking ahead to the next 25 years, she thinks Erasmus will *'change for the better because the new programme will also involve universities from other continents.'* But as student mobility expands, she suspects that it will become more competitive. *'These days, everyone who applies is more or less sure that they will be able to go. In future, their chances will be slimmer.'* That *'also has its good side because they will see that they have to perform better in order to go on a mobility.'*

The programme will certainly evolve, Boryana Klinkova feels, because *'society changes continuously'*. On the practical side, she would like to see less paperwork, more financial support for mobility to low-income students and the resolution of some issues around third country visas and study credit recognition. But fundamentally, *'the aim of Erasmus does not need to change'*.

Opening to Europe

'The positive impact of Erasmus is on both a personal and an institutional level,' sums up Savena Borisova. *'It has resulted in social openness to European issues. Over the 15 years that the programme has been running in Bulgaria, an Erasmus culture has been built. And we'll be doing our best to sustain and develop it over the next 25 years.'*



CZECH REPUBLIC



ERASMUS: A REAL GATEWAY TO EUROPE

Twenty-five hours of trampolining for twenty-five years of Erasmus – just one of the strenuous happenings staged by Czechs to mark the anniversary. Jumping at the occasion were students from as far away as Japan.

And the centrepiece of the festivities was a marathon run. The university marathon is held each year, but in 2012 it was sponsored by Erasmus. Thirty-three relay teams took part, with four students in each team.

Poster and video competitions were among the other events, while the Erasmus Label competition focused on innovative, multimedia approaches to portraying mobility. *'The dissemination and exploitation of the results was very successful,'* comments Barbora Nájemníková at the national agency NAEP. *'Awareness of the programme in the Czech Republic increased.'*

Media meeting

A meeting with journalists produced significant media coverage. During the year, staff ambassador Milada Hlaváčková did a series of newspaper, TV and radio interviews. *'They asked what Erasmus brings to Czech students, how we receive foreign students, what we do for them.'*

At a conference in Prague, the country's Erasmus ambassadors spoke about their mobility experiences. The events helped people to *'understand that Erasmus can really help students to see other working habits than they are used to in their home country,'* says student ambassador Tomáš Vitvar. *'This can eventually help them in their career when they start working in international teams and multicultural environments.'*

Database of student reports

Available online, an NAEP database now contains some 21 000 final reports from students who went on Erasmus mobility. The reports show *'a great degree of satisfaction with the Erasmus programme,'* notes Barbora Nájemníková.



AND TO THE WORLD

For students, she says, the programme is *'significant in terms of personal, linguistic and professional benefits.'* They *'acquire international competencies and are more experienced and flexible in their transition to work.'* Teachers, meanwhile, *'gain international and intercultural competencies and can organise Erasmus-related activities in their home institution.'* The programme also helps them to *'follow the current professional trends.'* And higher education institutions see Erasmus as *'a prestigious asset that is conducive to attracting and recruiting more motivated students.'* The programme is *'an important instrument for internationalisation.'*

Cautious about travel?

Milada Hlaváčková points out that *'countries like the United Kingdom or Finland would normally be a bit expensive for our students to study in, but Erasmus helps them to do it. And they bring back excellent results.'* The number of incoming Erasmus students has increased over the years, she says. *'The outgoing ones, unfortunately, not. I don't know why, because tests show that their knowledge of languages is getting better and better. And once they get back from an Erasmus, they're keen to travel anywhere. But Czechs in general are cautious about going abroad.'*

Hlaváčková hopes Erasmus will continue for the next 25 years, *'preferably with a bit less paperwork. But it's one of the EU's best programmes.'*

Gateway

The anniversary celebrations *'pointed out that Erasmus is a very important complement of university study programmes,'* says Tomáš Vitvar. *'It can help individuals to start interesting international careers. Only educated people with real international experience gained when they are young can best understand how to deal with cultural differences, and find a common language. Erasmus is really a gateway to Europe and to the world.'*





Erasmus
25
Anniversary

DENMARK

HOSTING THE ANNIVERSARY

When he was 25, Picasso was at the height of his 'blue period.' Round about the same age, Paul McCartney wrote the song *Yesterday*. Albert Einstein celebrated his quarter-century by working on the theory of relativity. And, in its 25th year of existence, the Erasmus Programme reached record levels of participation with over 230 000 students.

With that comparison, Danish Minister of Education Morten Østergaard opened the main European conference marking the Erasmus anniversary. At the time, Denmark was taking its turn at the rotating EU presidency. So the country played a key role in the celebrations. Organised by the Danish EU presidency and the European Commission, the conference was held in Copenhagen on 8 to 9 May 2012.

In her opening remarks, Princess Marie of Denmark said she had always been impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of students who complete part of their education abroad. She too had studied abroad, gaining invaluable skills and friendships.

The three million threshold

The target of three million Erasmus students can be achieved by the end of 2013, Androulla Vassiliou told the conference. She is the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. The Europe 2020 strategy aims to invest more in skills and competencies, she emphasised, and the new Erasmus+ Programme contributes to this goal by offering five million people the opportunity to learn abroad. The challenge is to match education and training opportunities to the requirements of the labour market.

Well attended by journalists from all over Europe, a press conference in Copenhagen generated considerable media coverage for Erasmus.

Erasmus Manifesto

The programme's 66 student and staff ambassadors from across Europe presented the Erasmus Manifesto. This includes a call for increased cooperation between universities and companies through more intensive student and staff exchanges and better recognition of traineeships performed by students abroad. It also advocates a broadening of Erasmus coverage, with more resources available for attracting underrepresented groups. And it urges an expansion of the programme beyond Europe.



Live music and information about Erasmus featured strongly at a student event held in a square next to the conference. *'We had a Facebook campaign to promote this concert,'* says Lise Andersen at the Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation. *'The agency and the local Erasmus Student Network had booths at the concert, and we handed out promotional material.'*

Mobility catalogue

Denmark's figures for student participation in Erasmus are climbing rapidly, Andersen points out. *'In 2011, we had an increase of about 300 students, which is rather a lot when the total number the year before was 1900. Our agency is working hard to send more students out on exchange programmes, and Erasmus is a significant part of that.'*

More Danish teaching staff should also be getting mobile, believes staff ambassador Connie Vaever. *'If staff have the possibility of seeing other styles of teaching and getting to know people from other universities, it will improve their everyday teaching life. But encouraging people to go is rather hard work.'*

To student ambassador Nina Siig Simonsen, *'Erasmus is a shopping catalogue. You can pick and choose among 300 universities around Europe. That makes it much easier for people to get mobile.'*

She thinks the programme *'should become more global. As we become more interdependent, internationalisation is going to have an impact throughout the whole of society.'*



GERMANY



A CONCRETE IDEA OF EUROPE

For Germany, 2012 brought a double Erasmus celebration. Alongside the anniversary, it feted the country's 400 000th outgoing Erasmus student. *'That was quite an emotional moment,'* recalls Siegbert Wuttig of the German national agency DAAD.

The agency put out two publications charting the history of the programme's success in Germany. They feature reports on the careers pursued by Erasmus alumni. And Germany also issued a special Erasmus postage stamp.

Held in June, the national conference 'Europe on the move: 25 years of Erasmus' reflected on the programme's successful evolution, looked at its present state, and discussed future changes and challenges. Germany also organised regional Erasmus conferences around the country.

Good press coverage

It all generated a lot of media coverage. *'I've never had so many interview requests as in the past year,'* confirms Wuttig. *'There was even a whole special hour-long radio programme, just before the main anniversary event here. We took the students into the studio with us and had a great discussion about Erasmus. And we got good TV coverage of the anniversary events. That was a bit special. It's usually rather difficult to get education issues onto TV.'*

Erasmus is one of the best-known EU programmes, he feels. *'It's a real success story for the EU. Whenever people are asked what the EU has achieved, they always put Erasmus high up the list.'* Staff ambassador Christiane Biehl also sees the programme as a plus for Europe. *'For too many Germans, Europe is a rather abstract concept,'* she says. *'Erasmus gives them a concrete idea of what Europe can be about.'*



Mobility as staff training

Germany is particularly known for the high number of teaching staff it sends and receives on Erasmus exchanges – more than 3 000 per year in each direction. *‘That’s very important,’* thinks Siegbert Wuttig. *‘The teaching staff are the motivators, the multipliers.’*

Christiane Biehl sees the programme as *‘a form of further training and qualification’* for teachers. *‘They experience other teaching traditions, and this sometimes inspires them to try new approaches. We also promote this to younger researchers, because it’s a chance for them to initiate international networks.’*

A broader view obtained

Student ambassador Katja Krohn says Erasmus *‘changed my life significantly’*. Her first mobility took her to Oviedo, Spain, during her studies. Subsequently elected to the International Board of the Erasmus Student Network, she used her stay in Brussels as the job placement part of her university course.

‘I think it broadened my view,’ she says. *‘At the moment, I’m actually more interested in European politics than in German politics, because Europe is where I see my future.’* She would like more financial support for Erasmus students at the national level, so that lower-income students can have full access to mobility.

Investing in learning

Going on an Erasmus *‘certainly improves students’ soft skills, such as languages, self-confidence and networking,’* says Siegbert Wuttig. *‘We hope it also improves their knowledge of the subject they’re studying, but we don’t have sufficient data on that. That’s one challenge for the future – we must prove to the politicians that there is an effect on the improvement of learning value. Especially at times of crisis, we have to convince them that this is worth spending money on. In fact, investing in Erasmus, and education in general, is a way out of the crisis.’*





ESTONIA

MANY COLOURS OF ERASMUS

Language teachers may not always speak the same language, but when it comes to best practices and innovative teaching methods, they have plenty to learn from each other. So an Erasmus International Language Week held in Estonia was a useful way of marking the anniversary. It brought together teachers from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Estonia's biggest anniversary event was a conference on student mobility. Participants from higher education institutions and organisations were given an overview of the Erasmus programme in Estonia. Students and staff related their experiences and heard the results of various surveys. Talks on the internationalisation of Estonian higher education were followed by workshop sessions in which everyone could have their say.

'Many colours of Erasmus' is the name of a video contest for students organised by the national agency, the Archimedes Foundation. The agency also provided a range of promotional materials for the anniversary, ranging from posters to key rings, mugs and bags.

Higher education institutions involved in Erasmus contributed information days, conferences and poster contests of their own.

Internationally visible

'Estonian students and teaching staff have been participating in the Erasmus programme only since 1999-2000,' points out Terje Kaelep at the Archimedes Foundation. 'But by the end of the current academic year, the programme will have provided about 8000 of our students with an unique opportunity to spend a study and/or a placement period abroad. Without the support of the Erasmus programme, this would not have been possible. Additionally, the programme has contributed to about 3500 teaching staff and other staff visits.'

An important outcome of Erasmus mobility in Estonia has been that *'higher education institutions have become internationally more visible,'* says staff ambassador Sirje Virkus. *'It has helped to develop many professional contacts and then to develop other European joint research and development projects together. It has also widened knowledge of modern teaching and learning methods, and supported the development of intercultural competencies.'*



Europe more personal

The programme has helped Estonians to *'perceive European issues and development more personally, to feel them through personal contacts and experiences.'* Virkus anticipates that *'the virtual dimension will be integrated more into the Erasmus mobility scheme in the future.'* Through 'virtual mobility', higher education institutions can *'develop new innovative learning paths, as a way of fostering mobility not only between countries but also between disciplines and sectors.'*

Financial pressure

Student ambassador Helen Margus thinks more still needs to be done to reduce the obstacles students face while deciding whether to do an Erasmus. One of them is the financial pressure to graduate on time. *'Half of the student population in Estonia work at jobs while they're studying full-time,'* she notes. *'They're under big financial pressure to end their studies on time.'* And as higher education is also feeling the pinch, some courses are available only every other year. *'So if students think there's a risk that they'll fail their year by going abroad, then they'll say "No, thank you."* For Margus, the process of combining studies in different countries still needs to be made smoother.

'So far, the best achievements in the integration of Europe have been on issues related to higher education,' says Terje Kaelep. *'Erasmus is seen as a European success story. A very good start has been made with the Bologna process and the promotion of European higher education. But much more effort is needed to link higher education with the EU labour market and the economy in general.'*



IRELAND



GOING FOR IT

Spare a thought for the intrepid Spanish student Mariano Montesinos. It was right at the end of November 2012 that he set out on his bicycle for a nine-day, thousand-kilometre tour of Ireland with an Erasmus logo on his back. *'He met up with a lot of people along the way, as well as with the reality of November weather on this side of the world,'* recalls Gerry O'Sullivan at Ireland's Higher Education Authority.

Meeting people was very much the theme of the Irish anniversary celebrations. For instance, the country's Erasmus team stepped up their presence at the higher education fairs where school leavers gather their information about study options. *'It's important to let school leavers know that the programme exists and that it isn't just for people who are learning languages,'* says student ambassador Jessica Gough.

Boosting language skills

Currently, Ireland has far more incoming Erasmus students than outgoing ones. And language is the main cause of that gap. English attracts foreign students to Ireland but also makes Irish people think twice about studying in continental Europe. Staff ambassador Miriam Broderick explains that *'Irish students fear that if they study abroad they won't be able to bring back the credits they need. However, increasing availability of pre-departure language courses is changing this.'*

At an anniversary conference in Ireland, speakers from other small European countries explained the position of languages in their school curricula. The conference also highlighted the employment opportunities available in continental Europe, and Irish employers stressed the growing importance of language skills. These benefits are encouraging academics to design IT and engineering degree courses with an integrated foreign language. Broderick also notes the *'new student-led demand for languages – and a strong interest in the flexibility Erasmus now offers for work placements combined with study abroad.'*



Erasmus certainly affects the Irish view of Europe. *'Roughly 32 000 people in Ireland have been on an Erasmus mobility since the programme began in 1987,'* points out Gerry O'Sullivan. *'If you count in their families, friends and colleagues, that means 300 000 or 400 000 people have been in contact with someone who has been on an Erasmus. And we've never heard of anyone who had a bad experience and wished they'd never gone. So that's a very positive message coming back to Ireland about Europe.'*

Learning self-reliance

Jessica Gough urges anyone who is contemplating an Erasmus to *'just go for it'*. A language student, she did her own Erasmus in Barcelona, Spain and is now training to be a conference interpreter. *'Just by being abroad,'* she says, *'you learn how to overcome obstacles and be self-reliant.'*

She has tackled plenty of obstacles herself. Cerebral palsy affects the left side of her body and her balance. *'Many people with disabilities would love to study abroad,'* she believes, *'but they're scared to go because the support systems are different in each country. We just need one contact within each university who can put people in touch with an appropriate agency. And we need an international network of students with disabilities.'*

A lever for good news

'The 25th anniversary provided us with a lever to get things into the media,' says Gerry O'Sullivan. *'It's not always easy to get the press interested in good news – and Erasmus is very good news.'*



GREECE



A BRAND NAME

Erasmus is ‘well-known in Greece. It’s a brand name,’ says Elina Mavrogiorgou, Erasmus project manager at the Hellenic LLP National Agency/IKY.

Staff ambassador Katerina Galanaki attributes the programme’s popularity to frequent promotional features in the press, as well as its good reputation among Erasmus participants. The impact of the programme on Greek attitudes towards Europe has been ‘very positive,’ she feels. ‘People really love Erasmus. There was major public concern in Greece when Erasmus was reported to be under financial threat.’ She has informed all the Greek higher education institutions about the Erasmus Manifesto.

Greek celebrations of the 25th anniversary included local events by higher education institutions, national media coverage during the main event in Athens and the launch of a new game called ‘Erasmusbook’.

Beating the crisis

Greece is facing severe austerity measures. So is the crisis making it more difficult to persuade students and staff to go on an Erasmus exchange? ‘We were afraid that this would happen,’ replies Elina Mavrogiorgou. ‘But at the moment we see quite the opposite, because they consider it as a window of opportunity. In particular, the work experience gained through Erasmus placements makes it easier to find a job abroad. That’s why these placements are popular in Greece and we expect them to be even more so in the future.’

She also insists that higher education in Europe must ‘keep its integrity’. Business needs ‘cannot be the only criterion for study reform. Higher education should be a step forward. It should lead and not follow the common trends. The construction of Europe will not be solid if it is based only on financial criteria.’

Study credit progress

As an ‘Erasmus pioneer’ herself, Katerina Galanaki believes that many more people should take advantage of the programme. ‘The major achievement of the past 25 years has been the mutual recognition of study credits among the EU countries. That’s very important, so that graduates don’t have to waste their time repeating the same courses.’



She also believes that Erasmus has led students in Greece to take a more balanced view of their own higher education system. *'Greeks used to say that university teaching in this country was not always good. Now, students come back and tell me what was good in the institution they attended, but also what is better here. We try to take the good points students see abroad and implement them in our university. In many cases, study programmes have been evaluated by students themselves once they have had the opportunity to take a critical look at different approaches.'*

Bridges to other continents

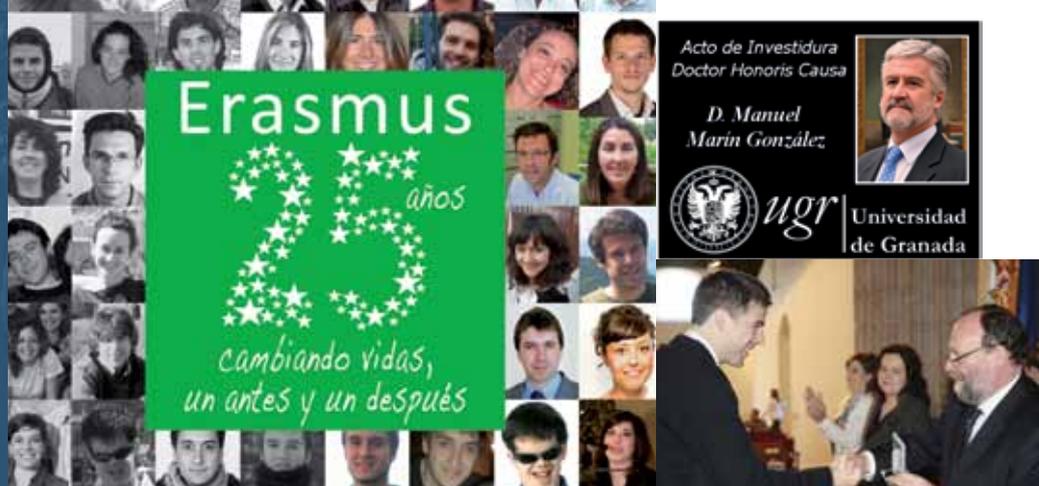
Greece's student ambassador Maria Kaliambou now teaches European Ethnology and Modern Greek at Yale University, USA. *'It was during my student Erasmus exchange in Germany that I discovered my real passion for ethnology,'* she recalls. *'It gave me opportunities that would ultimately lead me to one of the world's most prestigious universities.'*

She suggests that Erasmus should embrace new opportunities for academic exchange, such as online teaching. Used appropriately, virtual mobility blended with short-term physical mobility would include students who might not otherwise be able to afford it.

Based on her teaching experience at Yale, she thinks that growing numbers of students are interested in international exchange programmes. *'Erasmus should definitely continue. It should expand to the whole world, so that we can build bridges to other continents and become citizens of the world.'*



SPAIN



OPENING UP

'If you go out into the street in Spain and ask anybody if they've heard of Erasmus, they'll say "Yes, of course. That's the European mobility programme for students".'

There may be a particular reason for that, thinks Spain's Erasmus staff ambassador Fidel Corcuera-Manso. *'It's very well known here, because in a way we've grown up with it. When Erasmus started 25 years ago, it was at a time when Spain was opening up more and more. We were looking to the wider world and more particularly to Europe.'*

At the national agency OAPEE, José M. González agrees. *'The anniversary motto was "Changing Lives, Opening Minds" and that's exactly what we hear from our students when we ask them about their experience abroad. In 1987, Spain sent only 95 students on an Erasmus. In 2013, we're sending more than 45 000. This means that around 10% of our graduates will have taken part. The European Commission has set an ambitious target of 20% student mobility for 2020, which Spain will undoubtedly achieve, providing financial support is guaranteed.'*

For staff, meanwhile, Erasmus is *'the way to intensify cooperation with European partner institutions and learn from each others' experiences. So it directly enriches their professional careers, and indirectly their home institutions.'*

Four topics for the future

Spain's anniversary celebrations included an Erasmus students' conference at the University of Granada. Past and present Erasmus students, both from Spain and abroad, debated four topics: academic recognition, employability, funding and optimal conditions for participating in the programme. These discussions resulted in a final manifesto.

They were followed by a National Conference on the 25th anniversary of Erasmus, during which awards were presented to 25 students whose stories had been selected for a special anniversary publication. Manuel Marín, Vice-President of the European Commission and in charge of education in 1987, was awarded an honorary PhD. *'He had an essential role in the beginning of the programme,'* González recalls, *'and he gave a remarkable speech on how the programme was finally approved after solving many obstacles.'*

Universities across Spain also held anniversary events.



Culturally enriching, technically helpful

Mobility has become something of a habit for Spain's student ambassador Tomás Sánchez López. After an Erasmus in Finland, he did a PhD in South Korea and research in Cambridge, United Kingdom. And now he is in Wales, United Kingdom, working on information fusion for the European aerospace and defence corporation EADS.

'The university in Finland offered very specialised courses on aspects of computing that particularly interested me,' he says. 'I wouldn't have had access to the same courses if I'd stayed in Spain. So my Erasmus was both culturally enriching and technically very helpful.'

Personal and public interest

Sánchez López hopes the EU will set some guidelines in future on how many students each country should be sending on Erasmus mobility. *'I appreciate that this is a decision taken by the national authorities, but there are fixed pots of money. So Erasmus participants from one country may have to get by on much lower grants than those from another country.'* But he also urges all Erasmus participants to *'remember that you're getting money from the European taxpayers and make the very best use of the time that's given to you.'*

Money well spent, according to Fidel Corcuera-Manso: *'I don't think Europe could afford to deprive itself of a programme that is now being imitated all over the world. It's a prime example of how personal interest can be combined with the public interest.'*



FRANCE



GÉNÉRATION ERASMUS

A student flashmob in Bordeaux formed the figure 25 to mark Kick-Off Day – the official launch of the French anniversary celebrations.

These were a good mix of serious and much less serious events. The idea, as Antoine Godbert, the Director of Agence Europe-Éducation-Formation France, puts it, was to *'combine exactly those elements that we see as best symbolising the programme's success, namely the acquisition of competences and the spirit of togetherness and sharing, which is a youthful ideal.'* Hence the anniversary slogan 'Génération Erasmus.'

The programme was already widely known in France, he says, but the anniversary events *'helped to reinforce the brand-name. From managing directors to taxi drivers, everyone knows Erasmus.'*

Vintage Erasmus

University Business Meetings in Paris highlighted the internship side of Erasmus and drew some 7 000 visitors. A meeting of universities' international relations Vice-Presidents also featured on the anniversary programme, as did a 'Tour de France' by the Erasmus Student Network. On 25 campuses across the country, they handed out a 25th anniversary booklet and 'other goodies'.

And talking of goodies, France not only issued a special postage stamp, it also produced a special wine – Pessac-Léognan Génération Erasmus. 2012, naturally. An excellent year.

Moving tributes

On the artistic side, a cross-border call went out for short films on the subject of 'Erasmus Generation – Free to Move'. The ten best were screened at the Kino international short film festival.

A rock compilation by 25 artists from 25 European countries was jointly produced by the national agency and the Europavox festival. The CD was handed out to the student festival-goers in Clermont-Ferrand.

Back to Bordeaux for the closing event – a two-day conference for representatives of national agencies and higher education in the 33 Erasmus countries. And to round it all off, a big Free to Move Party at the Museum of Contemporary Art.



The Europe that works

So has it all influenced French attitudes to Europe? Antoine Godbert is reserving judgement. *'As a democrat and a European citizen, I think we should wait and see what happens in the European elections.'* But he does sense that *'a total consensus, right now, that Erasmus is "the Europe that works."*

Certainly, it worked for the French media. A current affairs radio programme broadcast students' and teachers' accounts of their Erasmus experiences, and there was coverage in national newspapers. Student ambassador Julien Péa and staff ambassador Nathalie Brahimi were interviewed on regional TV and radio.

Putting it into words

Higher education institutions are changing their strategy, thinks Péa. *'They're building networks within the Erasmus network. The emphasis is shifting from quantity to quality.'* Virtual mobility will soon be *'at the core of the Erasmus programme,'* he predicts. In future, simply putting 'Erasmus' on a CV will not be enough to impress a potential employer. *'Going on an Erasmus has become commonplace now. So you'll have to explain what you actually gained from the experience. Universities are very focussed on preparing students for an Erasmus, but much less on follow-up after they get back. They need help to put their experience into words.'*

For educational institutions, Brahimi thinks, Erasmus means above all *'that you can have exchanges with staff who bring new teaching methods and can use their own language when they teach our students. You can put your heart and soul into working with these people, because you become friends. That's what has made Erasmus strong and will keep it strong.'*





Erasmus:
changing lives
opening minds
for 25 years



ITALY

THE ERASMUS HERITAGE

Rome's Museum of Contemporary Art was the setting for one of Italy's main anniversary events. It featured paintings, sculptures and concerts by students. Entrepreneurs, journalists and former Erasmus students reflected on how the Erasmus experience has changed, and how it contributes to making young people more competitive in the workplace and ready to adapt to new situations. University staff, the Erasmus ambassadors and government representatives discussed the challenges for the next 25 years.

In Fiesole, education policy-makers examined the strategic value of Erasmus mobility to the development of future European generations, at an event hosted by the European University Institute.

Big echo

The celebrations created *'a big echo in Italy,'* reports Claudia Peritore Head of the Erasmus Unit at the National Agency. Higher education institutions and the Erasmus Student Network staged conferences, concerts and plays across the country. *'Articles and interviews were published in the local and national press and on many websites, and interviews were shown on TV.'*

She thinks that *'almost every person who has benefited from a study, training or teaching mobility period in Europe pays more attention to European issues.'* Higher education plays *'a key role in the EU 2020 strategy,'* as it is *'the main means for the development of a smart and well-prepared future generation.'* But higher education institutions *'have to be in touch with the world outside,'* including business and the labour market. This has not always been the case, Peritore feels.

Looking to the future, she is convinced that *'it would be possible to foresee a sort of compulsory international study period during higher education.'* But *'of course, financial support has to be granted to all participating students as well as career recognition for the teaching staff involved.'*

GaragErasmus

'A lot of fortuitous and fortunate meetings' happened during the anniversary, recalls staff ambassador Ann Katherine Isaacs. One project to emerge from them is GaragErasmus. *'This has been quite a surprise,'* she says, *'and it's something really created by the festivities.'*



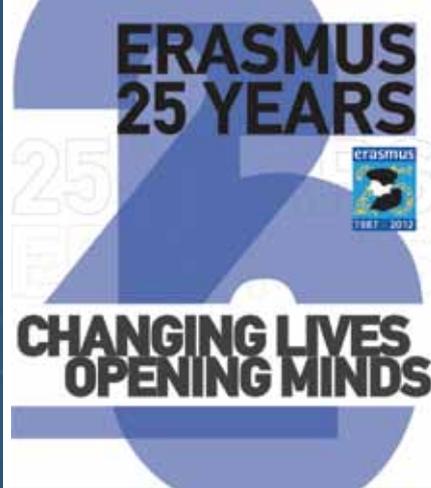
Launched by a group of successful former Erasmus students, the GaragErasmus foundation was *'incubated'* by the Tuscany Region. It is building up a network of ex-Erasmus professionals. Their aim is *'a truly united European society'* which can create opportunities for *'innovation and development'* by promoting the networkers' *'entrepreneurship potential and ideas.'* More specifically, it intends to foster start-ups, job placements and international business partnerships. Its Check-In Europe database went live during 2012, and the project was presented to the European Parliament.

Experience and knowledge

The Erasmus programme has built up a *'huge patrimony of experience and knowledge,'* insists Isaacs. *'It's not just about people going to study in another country. It has also supported extremely important programmes which, for instance, set up the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credit system. That is now the basis for the national systems in the entire 48-country European Education Area.'*

She also cites TUNING Educational Structures in Europe, which started in 2000 as a project to link higher education programmes to the Bologna Process and later the EU's Lisbon Strategy. TUNING developed new approaches to the design of degree programmes, and these are now being applied worldwide. *'This is something that other countries take from us,'* she says, *'because it's a free offer and something they need. And all this comes from Erasmus.'*





CYPRUS



BROADENING HORIZONS

Every year, Cyprus holds an Educational Fair in Nicosia. Higher education institutions from Europe and beyond fly in to sell their wares. The 2012 edition of this fair was the backdrop for the island's main Erasmus anniversary celebration.

Concerts by Erasmus students featured strongly, and promotional material was distributed throughout the event. Linking up with the EU's 'Youth on the Move' initiative, the festivities were attended by European Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou and the Cypriot Minister of Education and Culture.

'Thousands of people from both Cyprus and abroad visit this fair,' says Roula Kyrillou-Ioannidou at the country's Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes. *'So we took the opportunity to present Erasmus and best practices in lifelong learning.'*

DJs, balloons and Erasmus birthday cakes were to the fore at street parties in Limassol and Nicosia for the programme's 25th anniversary. Enthusiastic crowds watched dance displays and a fashion show featuring recycled materials. Radio and TV ads created by the students drew people to the events.

A staff training week to mark the anniversary was held at Cyprus University of Technology, which also organised an international food and culture festival.

Convincing the stay-at-homes

The national agency in Cyprus certainly had something to celebrate. Overcoming major cultural barriers, it has managed to get more and more young Cypriots interested in Erasmus.

'In the past, we didn't have any universities here,' points out Kyrillou-Ioannidou. *'So people went and studied in the UK and Greece. Once we did set up universities of our own, the students tended to live at home. Family ties are very strong in Cyprus. At first, young people hesitated about Erasmus, and parents were reluctant to let their sons and daughters go. It took a lot of time and effort to get the numbers above the 100 mark, but the students who did venture abroad came back so thrilled about it that they encouraged the others.'*



The mobile lifestyle

Student ambassador Stavroulla Antoniou is a case in point. *'I think people even get bored with hearing how excellent my Erasmus experience was,'* she laughs. She studied English literature in Rome. *'I was surprised to discover that the Italians teach English literature in their own language. But it certainly improved my Italian.'*

Erasmus is *'a lifestyle,'* she says. *'Erasmus students remain mobile not just in their employment but also in their relationships. They stay friends. They even get married. There's an Erasmus baby in Limassol. It's not actually called Erasmus, but it's the fruit of Erasmus.'*

European citizens

Erasmus participants *'manage to influence their fellow students as well as their close family, relatives and friends on European-related issues,'* thinks staff ambassador Maria Hadjimatheou. More generally, she feels that EU education programmes *'can foster the sense of European citizenship'.* She cites five key factors: *'recognition of European heritage, EU loyalty, the right of free movement, political participation and active citizenship'.*

New outlooks

'Erasmus is changing mentalities for the better here,' says Roula Kyrillou-Ioannidou. *'While our students may be very intelligent people, their horizons are narrow and they're often socially immature. Everything's done for them by their mothers – even the decisions about what to study. Spending time abroad is good for our young people, and we hope to have more than 300 outgoing Erasmus students within the 2013 Call.'*



LATVIA



ERASMUS THE MEDIATOR

No less than 45 birthday cakes signalled the start of Latvia's Erasmus anniversary celebrations, including one for each of the universities taking part.

Photo, video and story competitions gathered students' Erasmus experiences, while an interactive Erasmus stand toured a number of public events and libraries.

Debates in Latvian secondary schools focussed on students' preparedness to take part in Erasmus exchanges. A conference for the country's policy-makers and higher education experts looked at Erasmus and the Bologna Process. Some 3D art objects in the streets of Riga showed the most popular Erasmus destinations for Latvian students and teaching staff.

An Erasmus Night for future exchange participants featured a marathon quiz on the programme and on EU issues. Academics, higher education staff and Erasmus coordinators attended an Erasmus 25th Anniversary Gala. This included an awards ceremony and an exhibition of paintings and mosaics of European cities by staff ambassador Aleksejs Naumovs, who teaches art.

Projects and ideas

'For us,' he says, 'the Erasmus programme has turned out to be a mediator. It has brought about countless excellent projects and opened up a whole universe of knowledge and culture for students. For academics and other university employees, Erasmus is a success story. It's a great chance to get to know other countries' traditions, education systems and teaching methods. It complements and improves our teaching programmes here in Latvia. Staff bring back some interesting ideas that we try to implement in our programmes.'

The anniversary events drew a lot of coverage by Latvia's electronic media. A statement by all Erasmus ambassadors about the importance of continuing the programme was also broadcast.

Concrete EU benefit

Student ambassador Madara Apsalone saw the anniversary as 'an opportunity to put out the message that Erasmus is not just for the students who take part. It's part of building the EU and broader social development. I think that message has been understood. And it's always good to show the positive side of the EU. Otherwise, all we hear about is crises. Erasmus brings concrete benefits to people, and that's why the EU was founded.'



In 2006, Apsalone did an Erasmus at a business school in Copenhagen. *'I really liked the programme and as a result, I went on another study exchange to the US, where I did my master's. I've always liked to travel, but to really live abroad and study in a different education system is a new level of experience. We're sharing a lot of things in Europe these days, and borders are becoming less of an obstacle.'* She now works in the Latvian Ministry of Finance, where she deals with international economic and financial affairs.

Not whether to go but where

Erasmus is changing and will continue to change, Apsalone thinks. For today's Latvian students, *'it has become a question of where to go instead of whether to go.'* Also, *'the procedures are improving notably the recognition of study credits. Ten years ago, ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) was a big mystery, but now it's a norm.'*

Still missing, she feels, is a similar scheme for grades. *'There are some tables showing that, say, A in one country means eight in another, but there's no real system and universities' international coordinators just sort of guess what the grade should be. This is the next big thing to solve.'*

'I'm sure Erasmus has positively influenced Latvians' view of the EU,' says Aleksejs Naumovs. *'Europe has become more accessible and understandable thanks to mobility.'*



LITHUANIA



CHANGING THE MIND OF SOCIETY

As the biggest mobility programme in Lithuania for students and teachers, Erasmus has had *'a major impact on the internationalisation of higher education here,'* declares Ilona Kazlauskaitė Head of the Higher Education Unit at the Lithuanian National Agency, the Education Exchanges Support Foundation. In particular, the programme has *'influenced the preparation of a higher number of the modules and study programmes in English.'*

More than 150 teachers from all Lithuanian higher education institutions converged on Vilnius for the national celebration of the Erasmus anniversary. They were nominated by their home institutions as the most active Erasmus teachers. Erasmus coordinators who are administering staff mobility were also at the event. The 12 most active and experienced Erasmus teachers received an official acknowledgement from the Lithuanian Minister of Education and Science and a prize from the National Agency.

A National Mentors Day brought together some 130 student mentors from across the country. Members of the Lithuanian Erasmus Student Network took part in the event.

Planning for the future

'Students and teachers also held joint events where we swapped experiences and talked about the future,' says staff ambassador Vilma Leonaviciene.

The country's annual meeting of Erasmus institutional coordinators highlighted the programme's outcomes over the past 25 years and the current plans for its future.

Special postcards and pins and an Erasmus Facebook page also proclaimed the anniversary, as well as a brochure of Erasmus success stories.

The programme has had *'a positive impact on students' academic and personal development,'* says Ilona Kazlauskaitė, *'especially in enhancing key competences such as intercultural awareness and foreign language skills. For placement students, higher education institutions also note an improvement of their professional skills after an Erasmus.'*



There are positive impacts for teachers, too, as *'the majority of the higher education institutions in Lithuania acknowledge teaching abroad as a part of teacher's professional development.'* As for the institutions themselves, Erasmus is *'one of the major factors which encourage them to internationalise and to improve the quality of their study programmes.'*

Europe 2020

Kazlauskaitė hopes the Erasmus programme will remain active in future and that *'25 years on, it will be as popular as it is now and accessible for every European student.'* The quality and the internationalisation of higher education had a direct impact on the application of the EU's Lisbon strategy, she feels. It will, she thinks, have a similar positive influence on implementation of its current Europe 2020 strategy and *'the development of Europe in general in order to be competitive in the world.'*

Welcome courses

For the past 10 years, Vilma Leonaviciene has been organising Erasmus intensive language courses for incoming students. These courses concentrate on building their communication skills in local languages.

Looking to the future, she thinks that Erasmus *'can change higher education in general and change Europe.'* The continent's smaller countries *'are having to learn how to survive in a globalised world, and the Erasmus experience is an important part of that process. In a small country like Lithuania, it touches the whole of society. It changes the mind of society. People come back with new ideas and new language skills, and they spread a message of peace and tolerance.'*



LUXEMBOURG



MOBILITY IS A MUST

Up to the 21st century, if you were a Luxembourger and you wanted to go to university, there were no two ways about it: you had to go abroad.

Then came the University of Luxembourg. But for its students, mobility is still a must: *'It's part of the legal basis of our university that our students have to do a mobility during their Bachelor studies,'* explains Karin Pundel at the national agency ANEFOR. *'That's been compulsory ever since the university was created in 2003.'*

All current and former Erasmus students in Luxembourg were invited to an Erasmus anniversary party. The ANEFOR stand at the annual Luxembourg student fair was also placed under the anniversary banner.

The Luxembourg celebrations highlighted 'We Mean Business', an EU drive to promote workplace hosting of Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci trainees. *'The success of this initiative can be seen in the great number of enterprises contacting the national agency in order to get in touch with potential Erasmus trainees,'* says staff ambassador Lucien Kerger.

25 experiences

A special brochure, 'The Erasmus Experience', presents 25 students who have gone on an Erasmus over the past 25 years. The emphasis is very much on human interest. *'The idea was to show that there are citizens who participate in the programme,'* recalls Karin Pundel. *'We wanted to reflect the reality of what these people experienced during their stay abroad. It's a way of showing people that mobility really does make a difference.'*

In terms of student mobility, *'I don't think we could do much more than we're doing already,'* she says. Staff mobility *'still leaves some room for development. We only have about five staff a year going on an Erasmus at the moment.'* But in fact, *'many of the teachers at our university are already mobile. They're from outside the country.'*

HUNGARY

FACEBOOK FACES



'Due to the anniversary, 2012 was a definitely Erasmus-focused year in terms of communication,' recalls Szabolcs Bokodi at Hungary's national agency the Tempus Public Foundation. 'We cooperated with Moha Student Magazine, and they published 10 000 copies of a special Erasmus 25 issue. It included individual success stories, with colourful infographics and useful scholarship tips.'

It was also a good year for the Hungarian Erasmus Facebook page: more than 1 000 new fans in 2012. Mini-interviews with ambitious young former Erasmus students were published on the page each month. Some testimonies from this Erasmus Faces series:

- *'I became an independent, adult person while I was in Berlin with Erasmus' – Panni Néder, stage director.*
- *'I suspected that I would get the taste of a new world, but this experience exceeded my imagination' – Eszter Szigethy, graphic designer.*
- *'I made lifelong friendships' – Benedek Mohay, TV reporter.*
- *'I developed my languages skills there. I feel much more confident about speaking in German now' – Bálint Mohai, musician.*

An Erasmus photo competition brought 150 uploads and 500 more 'Likes'.

Mobile and employable

Targeting mainly higher education leaders and decision-makers, Hungary's Erasmus 25 conference was opened by Norbert Kiss, Deputy Secretary of State responsible for higher education. *'There is no higher education institution without Erasmus,'* he stated in his keynote speech. He underlined the importance of strategic tools for improving mobility and its impact on employability.

Different aspects of Erasmus were presented by practitioners. Topics included building international networks, improving mobility, the impact of academic staff mobility, the position of Erasmus in institutional strategy and Erasmus as a first career step. The conference ended with a panel discussion on the students' motivation and their prospects after their return. The event received a good press.

Erasmus in the evening

In a series of six Erasmus Evening Classes, 18 young ex-Erasmus students spoke about their current jobs in very different fields. More than 300 people came along to these classes.



'These were 18 really successful people,' says staff ambassador Mária Dudás. 'They talked a little about their Erasmus studies, but the main emphasis was on a day in their working lives: what they do, why it's important, why it's interesting and how it's connected to Erasmus.'

She has been on a number of Erasmus staff exchanges across Europe, and now teaches a course each year in a German university. Formerly a language teacher, she currently specialises in EU topics.

Research catalyst

Erasmus has had a great impact on Hungary since it joined in 1997, points out Dudás. *'The 40 000 students taking part in Erasmus represent a big figure for a small country like this. And the incoming students and teachers have had quite some influence.'*

For universities, there are solid advantages in being part of the programme. *'If you're not international, you're not a university,' she laughs. 'I think university managements have understood that. But internationalisation has to be done step by step. Mobility programmes are one of those steps. Information technology is another: online teaching materials and virtual universities. The third step is joint research. Erasmus doesn't promote that directly, but it gives university staff the opportunity to get acquainted. Then they can take it from there and find other funding. But the origin of this cooperation lies in getting to know each other. And that is very often due to Erasmus.'*



MALTA

ISLAND WINDOWS



'Bliet' ('Cities') was Malta's main anniversary event. It took its name from a collection of poems by Norbert Bugeja. A testament to present-day mobility, they were inspired by, and written in, different cities around Europe. All the poetry and the music at the celebration were inspired by this book.

Commissioned by a former Erasmus student, the show's concept was *'different from the normal stage setting,'* recalls Karl Mintoff at the country's European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA). *'Instead, it took the shape of an open area – a typical European piazza – with different activities going on.'* They ranged from poetry recitals to live or recorded soundtracks and juggling.

Building on Europe 2020

Meanwhile, EUPA has embarked on regular round-table discussions with the country's three higher education institutions about Erasmus issues. *'This is proving to be very effective, for both the technical and the promotional aspects of the programme,'* reports Mintoff.

The aims of the EU's Europe 2020 strategy *'should be endorsed and built upon,'* he insists, notably through *'an increase in the number of students entering the higher education arena.'* With further students enrolled, *'mobility across Europe could be enhanced even more, possibly becoming entrenched in every study programme of the European higher education institutions.'*

Windows on the world

'Perhaps students represent the one sector of Maltese society that has felt the tangible benefits of Malta's integration with the EU head-on,' says student ambassador David Friggieri. *'I'm sure that Malta's young generation of students feel they belong to an entire continent. Or, at least, that the windows and doors to that continent are wide open whenever they decide to set off to explore life beyond the island they call home.'*

He hopes the central ethos of Erasmus will remain largely unchanged. But *'there should, perhaps, be greater emphasis on the integration of students in the host institution across the board.'* He also believes that *'students and teaching staff from peripheral regions or who choose a host institution in a peripheral region'* should be compensated *'according to the actual costs incurred when travelling to and from their place of origin.'*



Reaching the excluded

For staff ambassador John Schranz, Erasmus *'needs to consider emerging crucial needs special to the times we are living in. Terms such as "marginalised" and "disadvantaged" are becoming applicable to an ever-growing percentage of the world's population.'* Three *'very obvious categories'* of students affected by this are those with personal financial difficulties, those who hail from countries – or from certain areas of a country – that are much less affluent, and those who *'hail from countries at the very edge of the Union.'*

Erasmus must also look to another group, he argues. Given the *'ever-growing mass movements of peoples,'* it should *'see what it could do in the face of the large number of children and youths hailing from non-European backgrounds and who are suddenly becoming European.'*

A wider community

Malta is a *'small island nation at the periphery of the European Union,'* Karl Mintoff points out. Erasmus *'has undoubtedly instilled a sense of belonging within a wider European community that shares the same values and core principles of our society. It has given a European identity and perspective to students and staff alike.'*



THE NETHERLANDS

A LIBERAL MINDSET



'She's certainly more independent and grown-up than when she went away. She's learnt a lot about people and she's become more enterprising. Also, she has seen that, while all roads lead to Rome, some may be better than others.'

Particularly as 'she' went to Finland.

Plenty of Erasmus students have been interviewed about their experiences. But the Dutch magazine *Europa Expreste* chose to quiz their Mums and Dads. The feature was one of an Erasmus series throughout 2012 in the magazine, which is published by the Dutch national agency Nuffic.

The agency also held an anniversary celebration during which prizes were awarded to the best Erasmus students and staff, picked by a jury. Meanwhile, a Euro 2012 football tournament in Rotterdam brought together 16 teams of Erasmus students. Croatia won.

Mobility need

'We think Erasmus will still be around in 25 years' time,' comments Nuffic's Heleen Ravenhorst. *'We'll have to see what the new programme brings, and maybe there'll be further changes after 2020, but I think the Commission is quite clear about the need for European students to be mobile.'*

The anniversary was *'the starting point for a lot of good discussion about how Erasmus should continue,'* says student ambassador Désirée Majoor. *'That was the important part, although of course it was also fun to look back and celebrate a little. We tend to regard Erasmus as quite normal now, and it's good to realise that 25 years ago, things were a bit different.'*

Core values

A positive surprise for her at evaluation meetings has been *'the importance that students still attach to the exchange of cultural values, to that basic Erasmus concept of getting to know each other.'* But the discussion *'has also been moving, very legitimately, to another strand – namely, how can we use Erasmus to promote cooperation between institutions of higher education, knowledge and research, and business partners? I'm sure Erasmus will incorporate more research activity in future, because education and research are becoming more closely linked. There are also increasing possibilities for students to undertake international projects with business partners, but in an educational context.'*



As well as *'valuing the historical, economic and cultural role of Europe'*, Major thinks education should be about opening up. *'Alongside the acquisition of skills and knowledge, it's still very important for education to give you a liberal mindset. You should be confronted with ideas you haven't met before, and that's exactly what Erasmus often does.'*

EU commitment

At international meetings in Brussels and Copenhagen during 2012, staff ambassador Bram Peper was *'very impressed by the enthusiasm of my European colleagues and by the Commission's commitment to the Erasmus programme.'* But he finds it a little harder to fire up his colleagues in Dutch higher education. *'There are plenty of international research communities, of course, but on the education side, internationalisation is not really at the forefront of my colleagues' minds.'* Part of the problem, he thinks, is that universities' teaching role is increasingly taking a back seat to the output of research and publications.

Peper also works on one of the Erasmus intensive programmes, held for a few weeks per year on a specific theme. *'We've been talking about emerging inequalities in the labour market and in education systems. You get to experience different teaching methods, and you work with colleagues and students from 14 different countries. So you can see how they learn from the interaction and from each other's skills.'*



AUSTRIA

WELCOMED AND WELL USED



Austria marked a double anniversary in 2012: 25 years of Erasmus and 20 years since the country joined the programme. *'We did have some formal events,'* says Gerhard Volz at the national agency OeAD, *'but we also wanted to get a bit more off the beaten track.'*

Caching in

So there was an Erasmus street party. And a dance show choreographed as part of the official event by staff ambassador Elena Luptak, herself a dance teacher. And for those who wanted to beat new tracks there was even an Erasmus Geocaching event. Geocaching is a nature-oriented treasure hunt using GPS and different geographic references.

Meanwhile, the main celebration in May brought together some 300 guests, among them two ministers, university representatives, Erasmus ambassadors, students and many others in an old theatre. It featured staff and students' personal stories of the programme's impact on their lives.

All of this generated some *'very positive'* media coverage, reports Gerhard Volz. *'In general, the programme has quite a good reputation here. I'd say that Erasmus is welcomed and well used in Austria.'*

Rising job placement interest

One upward trend has been in the number of Austrian students going on job placements through Erasmus. *'We looked into this, and it may be that our students are becoming more interested in gaining workplace competences instead of more theoretical knowledge,'* says Volz. Generally, the impact of the economic crisis has been limited in Austria, and he does not think it has affected students' willingness to travel. But he does see another potential problem ahead. *'Study curricula are becoming stricter and more demanding, and that's making it more difficult for students to find a time slot for mobility.'*

Erasmus will still be around 25 years hence, Volz believes, but some adaptations will be needed. *'Learning pathways are becoming more flexible. So people who go into work and then come back to education later on should also have the possibility of doing some kind of Erasmus.'*



Reaching out

One priority, he says, must be inclusion. *'We need to open doors for students and staff with non-traditional backgrounds or special needs. We should also give more support to students who have young children and have to take them abroad with them.'*

An Austrian with direct experience of special needs is student ambassador René Kremser. His own Erasmus was in Finland, studying social work. *'My semester was divided between course work and practical training. Around Vaasa, where I was studying, I got to see different types of social work – for people with disabilities, for instance, since I have a handicap of my own, but also for refugees.'*

Kremser is blind. He also has cerebral palsy and is mainly wheelchair-bound. Reaching out to under-represented groups is one of the issues tackled in the Erasmus Manifesto drawn up by the ambassadors in 2012. *'But that's not just about Erasmus,' he insists. 'It's the universities. It's about how they present special information for people with disabilities. There's still a lot more we can all do, all over the world, to ensure that people with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else.'*

Pushing new ideas

Austrian staff ambassador Elena Luptak sees one of her main roles as *'pushing new ideas'*. For instance, she says, *'we've launched some new master's programmes, such as one on social design, which is about art as a means of urban innovation. International connections have been very helpful in developing that.'*

She thinks Erasmus will continue to grow, especially for students. *'They're very curious about the complexity of relations in the world in general and the only real answer to all their questions is to let them travel.'*



POLAND



SOWING THE SEEDS

For Polish trees, April 2012 was a very good month. More than 600 students from Poland and abroad took part in Erasmus Forest, a social tree planting campaign run by the Polish section of the Erasmus Student Network. To mark the 25th anniversary, the students planted a record 25 000 seedlings. They also sowed the seeds of some major press coverage for Erasmus.

'I'm pleased that the anniversary celebration has an environmental aspect,' said Aneta Wilmańska. As well as being the Undersecretary of State at the Polish Ministry of the Environment, she is an Erasmus alumna and acts as ambassador for the forestry campaign.

Erasmus Olympics were among other Polish anniversary events. And at the Schuman Parade, held each year in Warsaw to celebrate Europe Day, students played a prominent part in the concerts and dancing. At a stand run by national agency The Foundation for the Development of the Education System, parade-goers could find out how to study abroad, get an internship, volunteer or benefit from youth exchanges. Students were also on hand to describe their own Erasmus experiences.

Media boost

An anniversary gala organised by the national agency brought together politicians and leading academics. *'The aim was to show the results of 25 years of Erasmus,'* explains the agency's Beata Skibińska. An exhibition focussed on the Erasmus Generation.

All of this was well covered by the media. Between 1 January and 15 November 2012, the Polish Erasmus celebrations generated 681 articles in the press as well as 273 items on the radio, 50 on TV and more than 3 000 online.

The optimism principle

'Erasmus has had a huge impact on the teaching profession here, through the exchange of ideas,' says staff ambassador Ryszard Zamorski. *'That also goes for our students. It's part of my duties, but also my great pleasure, to interview them when they return. They come back excited and much more open-minded. They're ambassadors not only for Erasmus but for Europe.'*



Education 'drives any economy,' he points out. 'We in Europe must invest in higher education – but the question, of course, is how to do it most effectively. Erasmus is the perfect platform for that discussion. More and more students, but also their families, see Erasmus as an opportunity to get both a better education and a good job. The whole principle of Erasmus is optimism.'

Quality and the market

That pragmatic outlook is shared by student ambassador Diana Dmuchowska. She now works in the ophthalmology department of a Polish clinic, but she did part of her medical studies on an Erasmus in Germany. 'It gave me new perspectives and new research opportunities,' she recalls.

Over the next 25 years of the programme, she would like to see 'more emphasis on quality'. Erasmus, she thinks, should 'respond to the needs of the market and the European economy. I really appreciate the aspect of culture, but going abroad also increases employability and promotes international cooperation, and I'd like that side to develop further. What is more, I am for less theory and more practice. Education should be directed to a purpose. So should research. To compete on the world market, Europe has to go for quality, and education is a vital part of that.'

Lasting values

Erasmus is evolving, Beata Skibińska says, but 'it still has the same values and the same ideas. And that couldn't be any different, because it changes attitudes, it changes lives and it focuses on human values. It will always be about influencing people. Even if the words change, the values of mutual trust and understanding will not.'



PORTUGAL



ONCE ERASMUS, ALWAYS ERASMUS

Hair streaming, books flying, a microscope perched on her bicycle, the young woman is pedalling hard. Lisbon's Belém tower is right behind her and she is just passing Barcelona's Sagrada Família and the Leaning Tower of Pisa. If it all sounds just a little unlikely, that is because she is a cartoon on a postage stamp. Portugal issued it specially to mark the Erasmus anniversary.

Symbolism was also in the air at Portugal's anniversary launch event. Or more precisely, it was at the airport. *'We thought that was a good place to hold the 25th birthday party,'* comments Maria do Céu Crespo, director of the national agency, Proalv. *'After all, it's where most people start their journeys abroad.'* Among the party-goers were several government ministers who are Erasmus alumni.

Supplementing mainstream media coverage, an Erasmus advertisement was produced and the national students' magazine Fórum Estudante devoted a whole issue to the programme. Universities and polytechnics throughout the country also held events, including a film festival.

'Young people and teachers in Portugal have always been enthusiastic about Erasmus,' do Céu Crespo emphasises. *'Over the past 25 years more than 70 000 of our students have participated in study or placement periods abroad, and more than 2 000 teachers have taken part in Erasmus-linked teaching assignments or training.'*

Tolerance and diversity

'The value of tolerance and respect for diversity of people is very present in Erasmus,' she feels. *'In responding to the challenges of each European generation, Erasmus is always present and will always be ahead of its time, propelling Europe towards a true unity in diversity.'*

Higher education institutions should, she says, *'strengthen their approach to the labour market and to the demands of the competitive economic sectors. This will certainly be the future challenge to which, through Erasmus, they could make a great contribution.'*



A better place

Higher education also has 'a big part to play in the construction of Europe,' says staff ambassador José Marat-Mendes. 'When we get to the stage that most politicians have been through Erasmus, I think Europe will be a better place.'

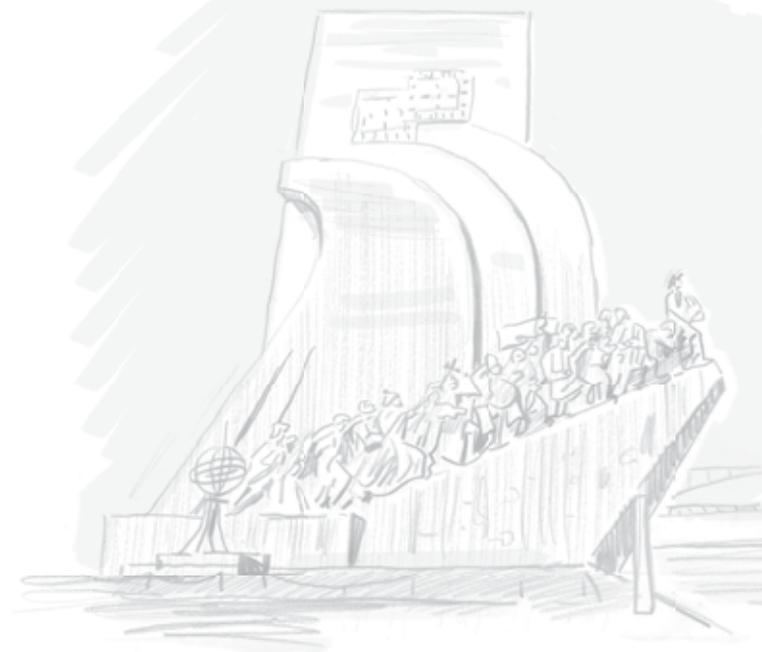
He has often organised Erasmus-backed summer courses involving both teachers and students from a number of countries. 'Even today, I receive visits from former students who made many lasting friendships on these courses. That's the spirit of Erasmus. I see it as part of my job as a professor to educate people to become European citizens.'

Once Erasmus, always Erasmus

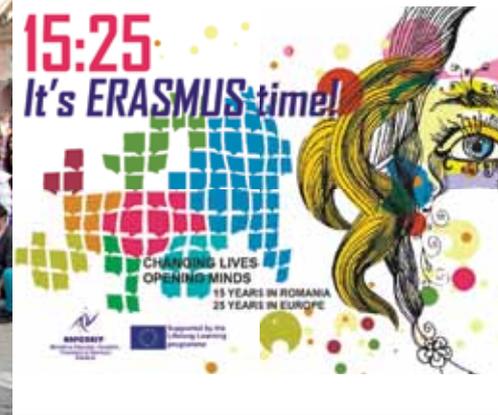
Student ambassador Filipe Araújo spent part of the celebration year touring universities and secondary schools to talk about his Erasmus experience. He also did a series of newspaper and radio interviews. 'Over the past 10 years, Erasmus has enabled many Portuguese to study abroad,' he says, 'but it has also brought many people from other countries to Portugal. So it has helped many Portuguese to learn more about Europe and its diversity. It's the most constructive tool that Europe has. I'm a European because of Erasmus.'

The programme 'gives you a more integrated perspective on everything,' he believes, 'and it helps you to create the kind of network you need in a globalised world. People are having more difficulty finding jobs these days. Without mobility, that will be even harder.'

'Actually, there are no ex-Erasmus students,' he concludes. 'Once Erasmus, always Erasmus.' Araújo now works as a filmmaker. Among his projects for 2014 is a documentary on Erasmus.



ROMANIA



THE IDENTITY OF NOW

Erasmus Open Minds Week was the central feature of a double Romanian celebration: 25 years of Erasmus and 15 years of the country's participation in the programme.

Staff ambassador Ion Visa was involved from the start. *'I don't think we realised 15 years ago just how beneficial this programme was going to be for Romania,'* he says. *'Individually, students and staff have come into contact with new academic environments, cultures and ways of life. Institutionally, it has generated a lot of technical activity and research.'*

A changed approach

The first group of returning students *'told our staff about the teaching methods abroad, about the infrastructure, how students and professors communicate in time to be ready for the final evaluation. They told us that a major part of the activities is project-based, and that the students work on projects in teams. This develops skills that will be useful in their future careers. Erasmus has changed the way our students and staff approach their activities.'*

'ERASMUS 15:25' was the main anniversary event, which included panel discussions with former Erasmus students who now work for top companies in Romania. There were also presentations from incoming students, promoting their home universities as study destinations. For Laura Popa, student ambassador, the highlight was *'a labyrinth theatre. This new concept brought together students who haven't experienced Erasmus and entered this adventure blindfold. They had different sensory experiences, such as tastes from cities around Europe.'*

Media plan

It was a good moment to raise the media profile of Erasmus in Romania. *'We had a PR plan right from the start of the year,'* explains Popa. *'Up to then, the press had never really taken the opportunity to interview incoming and outgoing Erasmus students, so we facilitated that. And we encouraged each university to link up with the local press.'*

For this anniversary year, a clip called 'Generation Erasmus – the Identity of Now' was launched. *'It's the first Romanian video promoting the programme. In this way, we're encouraging students from all over Europe to come to Romania on Erasmus by showing them flashbacks from former Erasmus students who studied in our country.'*



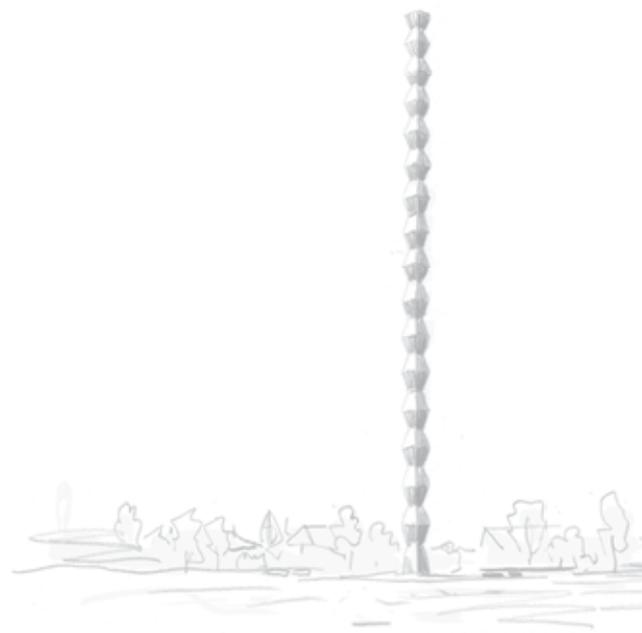
It is a timely message. In 2011, more than 4500 Romanian Erasmus students went abroad, while the number of incoming students was around 1500. *'That's a big gap,'* believes Popa. *'It's something you tend to find right across Eastern Europe, because the educational opportunities here haven't been sufficiently promoted. Now, it's my task to promote Romania more and get students coming here.'*

Recognising study credits

Meanwhile, the Romanian Government was getting to grips with another problem. A ministerial order was issued in 2012 requiring all universities to give full recognition to study time abroad. *'Three or four years ago, there were a lot of cases where study credits weren't accepted when people returned to Romania,'* Popa points out. *'Over the past year, the change has been dramatic since universities are no longer allowed to behave like that.'*

'We have to introduce new models and be very flexible,' adds Ion Visa. *'We can't expect every subject taught abroad to correspond exactly to the curricula in our home country. We have to recognise the content and the skills that are acquired while abroad.'*

He would also like to see more effort to attract third-year, master's and doctorate students into the Erasmus programme. *'They could then spend some time on research abroad and that would be of immediate use back here, when they go on the labour market.'*



SLOVENIA



PRODUCTIVE ANNIVERSARY

'2012 was really a very productive year,' says Slovenian staff ambassador Vesna Rijavec 'and all within the framework of the anniversary. We were very pleased to promote Erasmus further with our students. I prepared a special presentation for them at Maribor University, and we included the new incoming Erasmus students.'

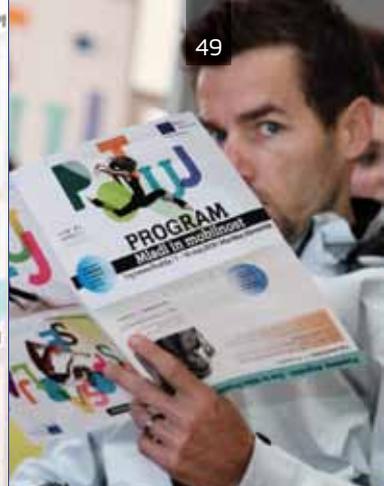
The Student Arena fair held each October in the capital, Ljubljana, gives students an opportunity to collect information about job offers and studies. Student ambassador Jure Kumljanc gave talks there on *'why and how to go on an Erasmus.'* Promotion at the Student Arena led to *'massive media coverage'* of Erasmus, he says, *'and it's still going on. I would say that, thanks to the anniversary, people are more aware of the programme, have more information about it and know where to look for it.'*

Back in Maribor, a 'Youth Week' organised by the national agency CMEPIUS and the university *'opened up the whole city to young people,'* recalls Vesna Rijavec. *'So I took the opportunity to talk to them in the main market square and pass on a very important message: we need to support Erasmus as the EU's most successful programme.'* A photo and video contest about Erasmus was among the Youth Week events.

Convincing the government

In November 2012, Maribor University brought together students and professors with government representatives for a discussion on all the aspects of Erasmus. *'We presented our experiences and we tried to convince the government that they need to support this programme further,'* says Rijavec. *'That brought in quite a lot of newspaper, radio and TV coverage of Erasmus.'*

Each Slovenian university organises a week during which there are no compulsory lectures or classes. Instead, seminars are held on topics of general interest. In 2012, these focussed on Erasmus. The annual meeting of Slovenia's Erasmus coordinators in 2012 was also timed to coincide with the anniversary.



Better balance

Slovenia has achieved a greater balance between the numbers of outgoing and incoming Erasmus students in recent years, notes Jure Kumljanec. The good news is that the incoming figure has been rising, due to general promotion of Slovenia as a travel destination. Less positively, the increase in Slovenian students' own mobility has slowed down, because 'people have been badly scared by the so-called financial crisis.'

The programme's main impact in Slovenia is via the labour market, he thinks. 'Students include their experience abroad in their CVs, and they mention Erasmus during interviews with potential employers. Because of that, many economic sectors here are more and more aware of the importance of the programme. To that extent, it also promotes the European Union.'

Cuts opposed

Meanwhile, Vesna Rijavec keeps up her efforts to convince all her teaching colleagues that Erasmus is important. 'In 2012, for the first time, I think that message really got across.' While she feels that Slovenian teaching staff's uptake of Erasmus is reasonably good, 'it tends to be the same people who go each time. We need to send out the ones who have never participated before.'

'The 25th anniversary marked a border,' says Rijavec. 'Erasmus has had a successful past, but now we must look to the future. And we're all a little concerned about the budget situation. The programme is really part of our system now, and it's beginning to show results. I would say: "Cut almost anything else, but don't cut young people's chance to open up."'





SLOVAKIA

EUROS, HIGHWAYS AND MOBILITY

'Erasmus has been gradually changing the university environment in the Slovak Republic,' says Denisa Filkornova at the National Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme. 'Higher education is closely linked to crucial trends within the transformation to a global knowledge society. Mobility is becoming an integral part of higher education here.'

Best mobility

In fact, best mobility practice was the main focus at a national conference marking both the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus programme in Europe and the 15th in Slovakia. During the event, the national agency awarded the Erasmus Mobility Label 2012 to the three most successful higher education institutions in this field.

One way and another, mobility is to the fore when Slovaks think about Europe. *'A survey here showed that three European programmes are well-known,'* staff ambassador Jozef Ristvej points out. *'They are the euro, highway-building, and mobility.'*

New faces

Continuing down that road, an Erasmus bus tour organised by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) Slovakia with the agency's support was well received. As the bus riders themselves put it, *'we went to five towns, we gave out 5 000 leaflets and we met 50 000 new faces.'* In addition, most of the country's higher education institutions organised their own celebrations.

The EU Representation in Slovakia held a press conference on the anniversary. *'Many journalists attended, and they reported in various media about the celebration of the Erasmus programme in Europe and its huge success,'* recalls Denisa Filkornova. The agency's own information campaign also generated publicity, especially in university magazines.

Jozef Ristvej took part in three workshops organised by the ESN on the future of the programme. *'We need to keep networking in Europe and exchanging ideas,'* he says. *'When I go on an Erasmus or we're hosting somebody here, it lets us see new teaching methods, new possibilities for presenting topics to the students and for interacting with them.'*



Through Erasmus, he has taught in Portugal, Italy and Turkey on his specialism, the use of information systems in crisis management. And it was his Erasmus exchange as a student in Sweden that convinced him to do a PhD in the first place. *'I saw how different Sweden is to Slovakia, and I wanted to make some changes back here.'*

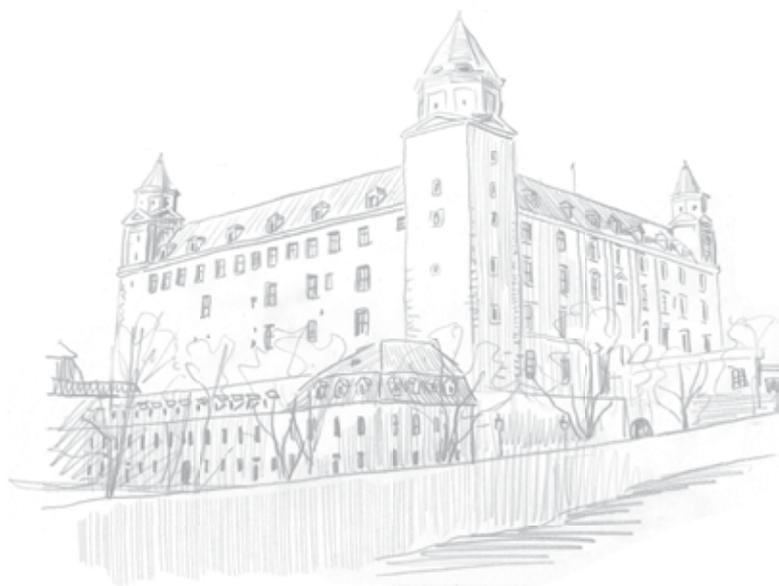
Multiplier

Student ambassador Jana Vitvarová sees her role as *'telling people about my own Erasmus experience'* but also *'showing that the money put into Erasmus is worthwhile. An open, democratic programme like Erasmus will always be needed alongside other grants. Greater use of distance learning may help the money to go further in future, but not all aspects of Erasmus can be virtual.'*

Erasmus babies

The multiplier effect of students coming back from an Erasmus is the most effective form of publicity, she thinks. *'People in Slovakia like to hear about things first-hand. They're not easily influenced by the media.'*

She did her Erasmus in France and subsequently worked for various French companies. But that is not the first thing on her mind when she talks about the programme. For her, the multiplier effect was more immediate. *'I represented Slovakia at a celebration for the millionth Erasmus student. And there was a boy there. A Czech. We got married and did research in Ireland for a year or so and then in Austria.'* They now have a son and a daughter, aged seven and five. *'Real Erasmus babies. They were born in Ireland of Czech and Slovak parents and they went to kindergarten in Austria.'*



FINLAND



ERASMUS FOR EQUALS

Equal opportunities were the theme chosen for the Erasmus anniversary celebrations in Finland. A meeting for representatives of higher education institutions featured a panel discussion on equality in the internationalisation of the sector. Panellists flagged up a number of issues for action.

But the main anniversary event was a students' evening organised by the national agency CIMO and Erasmus Student Network Finland. Held in September, it welcomed new Erasmus arrivals from other countries as well as Finnish students. Acrobatics by circus students and a big band concert were on the programme.

Overall success

Traditionally, students at each Finnish faculty or institution wear overalls of a different colour. And they decorate these workaday clothes with badges. So 8500 special badges were produced to celebrate and promote Erasmus. These collector's items were quickly snapped up.

A 'My Erasmus' photo competition covered a wide range of study experiences. There were also a number of anniversary blogs and local events across Finland.

Record numbers

'In 2011-12, over 4000 Finnish students went on Erasmus study mobility abroad,' reports CIMO's Anne Siltala. 'And almost 1200 went on placements. Those are record numbers. For teachers, the figures have been quite stable – about 1100 a year. And almost 800 other staff members have been mobile with Erasmus. In international comparison, these figures are proportionately quite high.'

But the number of incoming students was much higher. *'There were about 7000 in 2011-12. We're not too unhappy about that. It shows that Finland is an attractive study destination. When we first joined Erasmus 20 years ago, only a handful of students came here. That was mainly due to the language problem. But in the meantime, our institutions have developed a lot of courses and modules in English, as well as good housing and mentoring for visitors and crash courses in Finnish.'*



New ideas

'New contacts, new people, new ideas and new experiences' await anybody going on an Erasmus, says Finnish staff ambassador Paula Pietilä. 'But that's just the surface. My own Erasmus in Denmark changed my entire attitude to my work.' As disability coordinator, she got to know about the work of a support and counselling centre at Denmark's Aarhus University. She has cerebral palsy. 'I was looking for some new ideas for our services here in Finland. The main thing that Denmark gave me was the idea that you have to develop your work as a whole, and you have to see the client as a whole person.'

Finland is now providing more and better information to mobile students with disabilities, Pietilä feels. *'When I was a student, I just couldn't have imagined going abroad. Now it is possible, and that's very good.'*

In future, she hopes the programme will be *'more accessible for all, more equal. But how are we going to do that? Economic tools are part of the answer, but not all of it. You also have to develop good practices and tools for accessibility and equality.'*

Express mobility?

Anne Siltala hopes the programme will *'also have an impact beyond Europe in future,' and that it 'will be flexible enough to adapt to new sorts of need.'* For example, *'institutions keep asking for shorter mobility periods. At the moment, the minimum length of student mobility is three months. For some students, such as those who have children, that's a long time. In the Nordic Nordplus Programme, we have something called "express mobility", with a minimum of just one week. Of course, the focus is then quite different. But it can be a sort of threshold activity for those who are not so eager to get mobile. Then if they like it, they may go again for a longer time.'*



SWEDEN



BRIDGING THE GAP

Good practice examples were highlighted at Sweden's Programme Days for Higher Education, to mark the anniversary. They included the Erasmus in Schools project, where incoming Erasmus students visit local schools to talk about their home countries, as well as Stockholm University's preparations to send out larger numbers of Erasmus placement students.

The European Commission presented the forthcoming Erasmus for All programme, and the president of Erasmus Student Network International detailed the results of a recent study on recognition of Erasmus studies in different countries (PRIME2010). An ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) Label holder also explained how the label has helped to ensure higher quality.

Erasmus Weeks were held at different universities by the Erasmus Student Network and Sweden's national agency, the International Programme Office for Education and Training. Erasmus was also promoted at a fair for students in their final year of secondary school.

More coming in than going out

Meanwhile, a very large gap remains in Sweden's figures for incoming and outgoing Erasmus students. *'We send out only half the number of people we host,'* notes student ambassador Karl-Fredrik Ahlmark. *'Over the years since we joined the scheme, we've seen about 55 000 outgoing and 110 000 incoming Erasmus students.'* But at his university, *'we're working quite resolutely to increase the number of outgoing students, because that's one of the strategic goals of our international work.'*

The gap has various causes, suggests Jari Rusanen at the Programme Office. For a start, widespread use of English in Sweden's higher education makes it a popular study destination. *'To a great extent, that is due to Erasmus and to the Bologna process. They have internationalised our education structures.'*

An 'extra university' abroad

And for its outgoing students, the country also has a number of other exchange schemes in place. *'All in all, quite a lot of Swedes study abroad,'* Rusanen points out. *'It's the equivalent of an extra university: about 27 000 students.'*



Strong government funding of study travel means that *'people here have perhaps less need of the Erasmus strand than they do in other countries.'* But *'the learning agreements and the credit recognition under Erasmus make sure that students' time abroad isn't wasted. That's not necessarily the case if they go abroad on their own.'*

More projects needed

Over the next 25 years, Rusanen would like to see *'more internships for Erasmus students, more cooperation with enterprises, preparing students for working life.'* He also advocates *'more projects – Erasmus universities should get into deeper cooperation with their partners.'*

Karl-Fredrik Ahlmark notes *'the very rapid increase in the total number of countries and people involved in Erasmus.'* He hopes this will continue, *'but it may well be that the economic crisis will raise obstacles. Some Member States are not paying in the amounts that they committed to. In general, there may well be reduced public spending on this policy area. I would find it tragic if that happened longer-term, say from 2014 to 2020, because European spending on exchange programmes like Erasmus and on research programmes like Horizon 2020 yields more than the equivalent national spending would do.'*

Better charter

Ahlmark sees the new Erasmus Charter for Higher Education as *'an improvement on the programme's previous charter'* and chalks this up as a *'positive outcome of the anniversary year.'*



UNITED KINGDOM



GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SUPPORT

'We highly value graduates with international experience and believe it is very important for UK students to acquire the skills that can be gained on a work placement abroad.' That is Microsoft's view, as expressed by its UK education director Steve Beswick at the main British anniversary celebration. The IT multinational is *'proud to support the Erasmus scheme by offering its students work placements at our offices throughout Europe,'* he said, and he encouraged other firms to *'pitch in'*.

The event was hosted by the British Council, which is the UK's national Erasmus agency. Its Chief Executive Martin Davidson welcomed *'the government's announcement to continue financial support for the scheme,'* adding that *'institutions themselves and the private sector must find a way to encourage more students to take the opportunity, especially as Erasmus may expand beyond the EU in future.'*

Across the country, British branches of the Erasmus Student Network held balloon releases and barbecues. *'These led to considerable local press coverage,'* says the British Council's Jude Wood. *'We also encouraged universities to mark the anniversary themselves. Quite a few held gala dinners, with various events and Erasmus cakes.'*

Confidence-booster

An Erasmus study period in Venice, Italy was *'a really big confidence boost for me,'* recalls British student ambassador Kate Samways. *'And mentioning it on my CV gave me a bit of a leg-up at job interviews. My Dad says I came back just so much more independent. I keep on saying to my friends and family that not many other people my age have lived in the South of France, Venice and Paris, and I have Erasmus to thank for that. I see my future as an international journalist, using my languages to translate reports and travelling to cover stories in other countries. Without Erasmus, I would never have had the confidence to travel half-way around the world.'* Which she has. After working for the Eurosport channel, she is now doing TV work in Australia.



CROATIA

A GOOD HORSE RAISING DUST

Although only in its fourth year in Croatia, Erasmus has expanded very rapidly there. Just 235 Croatian students went on an Erasmus in 2009. But by 2012, that figure had risen to 1 317.

Starting a movement

'It's the first massive programme enabling students and teachers here to go on mobility,' explains Ljubica Petrović Baronica at the national agency AMPEU. *'The Erasmus programme started a real movement in Croatia.'*

That new interest was clear at the Erasmus round table and workshop held to mark the anniversary. About 30 Erasmus students from Croatia and elsewhere discussed what is best about higher education in Croatia and Europe and what could be improved.

For instance, they stressed the need for more courses in English at Croatian colleges, better links between the labour market and higher education, more teamwork, and more opportunities for practical experience. They said Erasmus provides them with new skills and opportunities for networking. It also prepares them for the labour market and enables them to bring back examples of educational good practice. But they would like to see lower administrative burdens and higher grants.

Encouraging innovation

'The average grant for Erasmus students is around EUR 300,' points out Petrović Baronica. *'That doesn't foster equal mobility opportunities for all. We don't have any co-funding in Croatia. If Europe is to be a leader in innovation, it would be good to encourage more students from fields such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics to go on mobility.'*

Staff ambassador Katica Šimunović, who teaches in a mechanical engineering faculty, agrees. *'In general, it's hard to motivate technical science students to take part in Erasmus, although I try my hardest.'*

Media turbulence

An International Erasmus Day gathered alumni from Croatia and abroad, along with potential Erasmus students, coordinators and embassy representatives. It featured stands where students spoke about their countries, and this event gained considerable press interest.



From a media point of view, student ambassador Jelena Simić thinks 2012 was *'turbulent but also vivacious'* for Erasmus. *'It started with the successful launch of the 25th anniversary, but I think Erasmus got the most media attention during early October when there were all the stories about it being cancelled.'* Those rumours were not actually a bad thing, she feels. The coverage showed that Erasmus is appreciated and people want it to continue. *'In Croatia, we say "A good horse raises dust". I think Erasmus will remain, because it's one of the EU's most cost-effective programmes.'*

She was also pleased that the Erasmus Student Network's Council of National Representatives chose to meet in Zagreb. *'Croatia is a very young country within Erasmus, and I'm very proud that we were entrusted with the organisation of this meeting.'*

Going virtual?

Katica Šimunović, meanwhile, sees change on the way. *'Due to the development of information and communication technologies, I – as well as some of my Erasmus colleagues who attended the conference in Brussels – believe that Erasmus, like all education, will be virtual. Personal contacts are irreplaceable, but I think it will be "Erasmus from home". I'll be able to teach students in Germany or Hungary from my own office, through teleconferencing.'* For teaching staff, the main advantage of the programme is contacts, she says. *'Staff mobility can have an impact on student mobility and vice versa. But Erasmus also leads on to cooperation on scientific research projects, for instance.'*





TURKEY

OPENING UP

Taxi drivers are mobility experts. But when an Italian newspaper article prompts students in Turkey to tell the drivers all about Erasmus, you know something else is on the move.

'We've been trying to drum up interest in the general and social media, in the spirit of Umberto Eco's interview with La Stampa,' explains Turkey's student ambassador Begüm Yurdakök. In January 2012, Eco told the Italian daily that going on an Erasmus should be compulsory *'not just for students, but also for taxi drivers, plumbers and other workers'*.

So to mark the anniversary, Yurdakök and other students took Eco at his word. *'We went out into the streets and told taxi drivers, waiters, lottery ticket sellers and other people how they could benefit from mobility. We had incoming students with us too, so we introduced them to these people. They were really interested. It's all about lifelong learning now, so why shouldn't an Istanbul taxi driver go on a mobility to Berlin or Brussels to compare how the taxi systems operate?'*

Mobility videos

Turkey also celebrated with a video and photo competition for all incoming and outgoing students. *'The subject was their mobility experience,'* says İlyas Ülgür at Turkey's Centre for EU Education and Youth Programmes. *'The prizes were handed out at the main celebration event, attended by students, university staff and public figures. Shows and a pop concert followed, which we co-organised with the local Erasmus Student Network.'*

Meanwhile, staff ambassador Mustafa Çoban held information meetings about Erasmus that were also publicised in the national and local media. In particular, he targeted older people who could encourage their children and grandchildren to take part in the programme, as well as students and staff who had not yet benefited from an Erasmus mobility placement.

He is keen for Erasmus to be more involved in industry, and has been talking to Turkish firms about taking part the job placement scheme. *'I also want to get more information material about Erasmus in Turkish. Many people here can't read any other language.'*



First time abroad

But at the same time, İlyas Ülgür sees the programme as *'the main pull for internationalising higher education and promoting language learning. For more than 80% of Turkish students who go on an Erasmus, it's the first time they've ever been abroad.'*

Outside the major cities, foreigners are still a rare sight in parts of Turkey. *'So it's important to people there to see incoming students walking around their streets. That will certainly increase their receptiveness to the European agenda. At the same time, our outgoing students can help to change Europeans' attitudes to Turkish people. So far, they have mainly encountered our migrant workers. Erasmus will give them a chance to see the intellectual side of Turkey.'*

Professional and personal change

Mobility *'changes both your professional and your personal development,'* says Begüm Yurdakök. *'Everyone has their own Erasmus experience.'* She now lectures on pharmacology and toxicology, but *'without my Erasmus placement, I couldn't have finished my PhD thesis, because the molecular techniques were much more advanced where I went in Sweden.'*

Bridge between Europe and Asia

Turkey is a bridge between Europe and Asia, İlyas Ülgür points out. *'We have great cultural riches to offer incoming students, and over the past 10 years, the number of universities here has more than doubled. Many of them are now teaching completely in English. Erasmus has been the main tool for the internationalisation of our universities, and it has helped to convince us that European values are the ones that Turkey wants.'*





ICELAND

MASSIVE IMPACT

'Erasmus has had massive impact in Iceland, like in most other European countries,' confirms Óskar Eggert Óskarsson at the country's LLP National Agency. This has happened 'directly and indirectly via the Bologna Process. Icelandic legislation on higher education has been adapted to the Bologna Process.'

He finds Erasmus is *'well known among students and staff and it is taken for granted that you can do one or two semesters abroad as a part of degree, which was very difficult prior to Erasmus'*.

A university goes universal

The programme has also changed the University of Iceland, suggests staff ambassador Guðmundur Hálfðanarson. *'By their nature, universities are international institutions, but in a fairly isolated place like Iceland, students used not to have that impression. Now they do. Even those who don't go abroad, who do all their studies in Iceland, now feel that there's a European connection.'*

When he was studying at the University of Iceland in the 1970s and early 1980s, *'it was an absolutely Icelandic institution'*. But today, *'10 to 20% of its students are from abroad. They are now an integral part of university life.'*

Press article well received

Iceland marked the anniversary with a video competition and photo exhibition. A celebration at the University of Iceland featured talks from former Erasmus students, as well as music and dancing. In December, the Icelandic Erasmus ambassadors published an article about the anniversary in one of the national newspapers.

'The article was well received,' comments student ambassador Ásgerður Kjartansdóttir. She now works as the Education, Science and Culture Counsellor at the Icelandic Mission to the EU.

Kjartansdóttir agrees that Erasmus has influenced Iceland. *'Each year about 200 Icelandic students study in European universities and about 450 European students study in Iceland,'* she points out. *'Icelandic professors and other staff have also benefited from Erasmus. It has therefore had an impact on the individuals and on the higher education system in general, which is more international than in 1992.'*

She would like the programme to become *'more inclusive and more international in the future'*.



Layered identities

A professor of history, Guðmundur Hálfðanarson specialises in the relationship between national and European identities. *'We shouldn't replace national identities with European ones,'* he thinks. *'It isn't possible and it isn't desirable. What we need is different layers of identity. They're not in conflict. They can work together. I think that's what the European project is about.'*

And for Iceland, Erasmus fits that pattern. *'Although we're part of Erasmus and of the Schengen area, Iceland is not in the EU. However, I can say that Erasmus is seen here as one of the biggest success stories of the European project. I think it's basically because our students like this experience. They're able to immerse themselves in another culture in a much more energetic way than you can do as a tourist.'*

Sense of belonging

At the same time, he argues, Erasmus *'can create a sense of European belonging among an educated elite. Not an elite in the economic sense, but people who are likely to be in various positions of power. For instance, one of the leading candidates in our 2012 presidential elections here was a former Erasmus student. She spoke at our celebration and she told us how Erasmus shaped her view of the world. So the success of Erasmus is to be seen in individual narratives.'*



LIECHTENSTEIN

HOW A LOCAL UNIVERSITY WENT GLOBAL

The trade fair held each autumn in Liechtenstein is always an opportunity for people to meet. In 2012, incoming Erasmus students went there, talked to people about the programme and their home countries and handed out souvenirs. *'The idea was to get them into contact with the local population,'* explains Trudi Ackermann, Director of the International Office at the University of Liechtenstein. The national Erasmus agency AIBA also had an information booth at the fair.

The 2012 edition of the University Ball took 25 Years of Erasmus as its theme. *'The Erasmus students led the opening dance, and each table was named after a country,'* she says. The evening featured music from different European countries. On Europe Day, the EU ambassador visited the university and the Erasmus students organised activities for the occasion.

Both of Liechtenstein's newspapers covered the anniversary. Radio and TV stations interviewed the Erasmus ambassadors about the programme.



Good combination

At an information day for outgoing students, Gerold Büchel described what Erasmus has meant to him and his career. He is the programme's student ambassador and is now a Member of Parliament. *'That was a good discussion,'* he recalls. *'The students' professor wanted their Erasmus to fit in closely with their current studies, while my view is that it is mainly about the social experience of just being and living abroad.'*

Büchel's own Erasmus consisted of six months at a business school in the French city of Lyon and an eight-month practical internship in nearby Grenoble. *'It was a good combination. Studying in another country and working in one of its companies are two very different experiences. If at all possible, I think students should do both.'*

And if they do their Erasmus in Liechtenstein, they may also scale some other heights. Taking a loftier view of the celebrations, staff ambassador Hansjörg Hilti led them on a hike across the mountains.



A step further

Trudi Ackermann hopes the proportion of students going on an Erasmus will continue to increase. *'I think the programme has great potential for transmitting the European idea, and we haven't yet reached its limits. We should take a step further. The EU should promote European master's programmes. There should be much more integration of study programmes, not just exchanges.'*

Erasmus *'also makes a good political contribution to the promotion of a united Europe,'* says Gerold Büchel. *'I'm confident the programme will continue to improve, evolve and develop.'* Liechtenstein is outside the EU, and he thinks this is unlikely to change. *'There's a feeling here that we're too small to join the EU. People would be concerned about that.'* But *'geographically we're in Europe, and maybe Erasmus helps us to feel more part of it all.'*

Internationalising through Erasmus

Meanwhile, the university itself has become very international. *'Erasmus made a major contribution to that,'* says Hansjörg Hilti. *'When we joined the programme in 1995, this was an institution for applied sciences only, and all the students came from a radius of 50 km at the most. Now, within a total of some 1 000 students, we have about 40 nations represented.'*

'A big part of our study programme is now in English,' he points out. *'Erasmus was the reason for that decision. Foreign students are a familiar sight in Liechtenstein these days, and they're well received. For our local students, a study period abroad has become a right. In some faculties, it's an obligation. Most of the students choose Erasmus.'*





NORWAY

IF YOU WANT TO UNDERSTAND EUROPE...

'Today, 130 participants will be gathering at the Norwegian School of Economics to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Erasmus, but also to look forward. Under the European Commission's proposals for a new education plan from 2014 on, Erasmus would be expanded to also include cooperation with other continents (...) Erasmus will undoubtedly be even more important for the internationalisation of Norwegian higher education in future.'

This is part of a fairly detailed think piece published in November 2012 by Norway's biggest newspaper, *Aftenposten*. Which just goes to show the power of anniversaries. As staff ambassador Wolfgang Laschet puts it, Erasmus *'is not always easy to sell to the media in Norway.'*

Vidar Pedersen, who wrote the piece, is well aware of that. Head of the Department of Higher Education at the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation, he knows that the country's students have plenty of cross-border exchange schemes to choose from. Some of those programmes date back a long way, and they provide very generous state grants. Also, Norway is not in the EU.

Strong model

Nonetheless, Pedersen is glad that his country signed up to Erasmus. *'International cooperation has become very important in Norwegian higher education over the past ten years, also in terms of government policy papers, and Erasmus has been essential there. I don't think our exchanges with other parts of the world would have been as strong had it not been for the model that Erasmus has provided.'*

So has it had any impact on Norwegians' less than torrid affair with the EU? *'I don't think students see this in terms of overarching goals of European integration. They want to go to an interesting place and get a good education. Indirectly, though, it may influence them. They do get a better understanding from having lived in another European country. But that's not something that most students would be concerned with from the outset. And it's not something that we highlight in our promotion, either.'*



Package solution

Wolfgang Laschet also takes the pragmatic view. Erasmus is 'a package solution,' he says. 'You get a more or less door-to-door service and you choose from a list of partners who are checked and approved by the academic staff. There is a very well organised procedure between the institutions, which should help to reduce the administrative work as much as possible. And if the partner is up-to-date with the requirements of the Erasmus programme and the Bologna process, recognition of the results gained at the partner institution should not be a problem.'

For Norway's higher education institutions, Laschet thinks, 'the networking aspect is the most interesting part. Entry into Erasmus meant a huge step forward for all Norwegian institutions in terms of broadening possible partner institutions and even possible countries. It helped a lot to extend our geographical networks.'

Over the past 25 years, 'Brussels has learned a lot about making this programme work,' he says. 'Now, it's often the institutions that make life miserable for each other by increasing administrative burdens and being very strict about things. I would like to see the programme going back more to the idea of a partnership of trust.'

Opening doors

Norway's student ambassador Frédéric Sardinoux does not want too many changes to Erasmus. 'It's working pretty well right now,' he thinks. 'It opens so many doors for the people involved, both students and staff. Of course, things can always be improved, and a bit less paperwork would be nice. But if you want to understand Europe, Erasmus is the fastest way to learn it.'



SWITZERLAND



BACK TO ERASMUS

Switzerland marked the anniversary with one big event in Bern. Karin Christen of the ch Foundation for Confederal Collaboration, the Swiss national agency, describes it as *'a mixture of speeches by politicians, a cultural section in which Erasmus students took part, some humour from a group of comedians, and networking opportunities.'* The event itself received good media coverage and there were also some background features on Erasmus.

'Of the EU's various education programmes, Erasmus is the one that is most likely to sound familiar to Swiss people,' says Christen. *'It's really been a brand name for some time here now, well beyond the academic world.'*

Full membership again

Not that the Swiss relationship with Erasmus has always been an easy one. When Swiss voters said 'No' to the European Economic Area in 1992, they also ended the country's full participation in Erasmus. Switzerland continued a broadly similar scheme, but it was only in 2011 that it returned to full membership of the programme.

One effect of this is that the grants for Swiss Erasmus students will now be higher, student ambassador Marco Amherd points out. So he expects the current gap between ingoing and outgoing student numbers to narrow. *'Many Swiss students have to take part-time jobs. That makes them reluctant to go abroad, because they don't know what the financial consequences would be.'* He would like to see more networking between Swiss universities and those elsewhere, on both teaching and research.

Repaid a thousand fold

Amherd's advice to potential Erasmus students is this: *'It's all a bit daunting at first, what with looking for a university and handling all the administrative work. But if you go, the experience will repay you for all that a thousand times over. As well as new intellectual capacities, you'll gain new social skills.'*

Learning languages is an important incentive for Swiss students to travel. Many jobs require a good knowledge of at least two of the four national languages. *'For some reason, students often prefer to learn these languages abroad,'* notes Karin Christen. *'For instance, German-speaking Swiss students will go to France, and only later will they really discover the French-speaking part of Switzerland.'*



Musicians' network

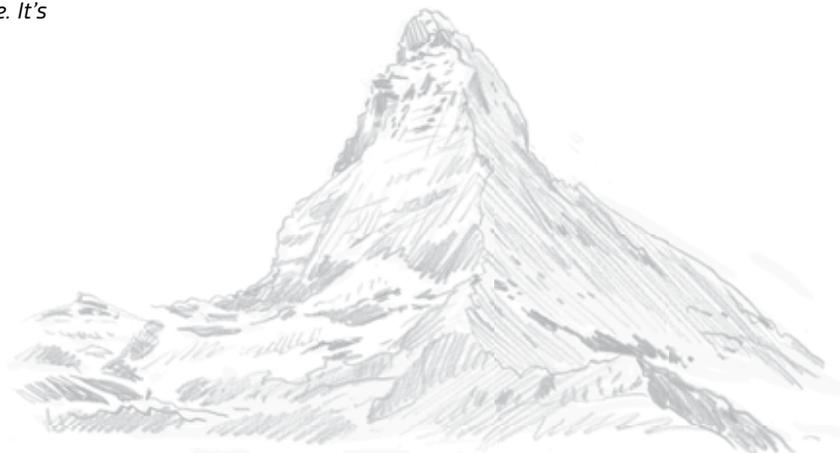
Marco Amherd's own motivation was musical. *'In 2011, I went on an Erasmus to Toulouse as it's one of the best teaching centres for organists. Also, I'm particularly interested in the French musical repertoire. There were a lot of international students there, so I was able to build a new network of organ scholars and specialists. While I was there, I was interviewed on TV and in the newspapers about my Erasmus experience.'*

'The change is tremendous' when Erasmus students come back to Switzerland, says staff ambassador Antoinette Charon Wauters. *'It gives them confidence. The conditions and the teaching methods are very different in other countries, and they have to adapt. Adaptation skills are one of the main things they acquire. And they also appreciate their own country more. It's the guys who never travel who do all the complaining.'*

Giving a flavour

A big advantage of Switzerland's resumed full membership, she thinks, is that it will now have access to the internship part of the programme. *'Our students are going to find that very useful.'*

Staff mobility is also important, she feels, because *'inviting professors in from other countries to teach courses is good for the students who don't go abroad. At least they will have been in touch with foreign academic ways of thinking. It gives a flavour.'*



A force of change in higher education

Erasmus has enabled students, academic staff and administrators to develop new curricula and test innovative approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. To ensure that this continues, national, regional and European bodies need to fund strategic cooperation and encourage staff to team-up with colleagues from different countries, disciplines and sectors in order to expand the boundaries of knowledge, ensure innovative and creative teaching and bring higher education closer to the needs of society.

Breaking down barriers across Europe

Erasmus has helped to break down barriers between national education systems and to create a common learning space across Europe. This could be taken further to create links between local communities, including companies and civil society, and young people from abroad. Higher education institutions and former Erasmus students now in positions of influence have a key role to play.

ERASMUS GOES GLOBAL

Erasmus, the most extensive academic exchange Programme in the world, should expand beyond Europe, providing opportunities for learners and teachers to broaden horizons and gain new knowledge, as well as for institutions to expand their capacity and strengthen partnerships with neighbourhood countries as well as globally. To make this a reality, adequate funding needs to be provided and visa problems solved.

Improving links between Education and work

An Erasmus experience offers invaluable skills to employers. Making the most of the benefits, however, requires greater cooperation between higher education institutions, the labour market and students, along with the wider community. Actions such as enhancing staff mobility between education and work and creating a platform for employers, academia and students to form partnerships could boost understanding and the uptake of Erasmus traineeships.

ERASMUS MANIFESTO

An Erasmus Manifesto was developed by the 66 Erasmus Student and Staff Ambassadors for the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus Programme in 2012.

It lists 10 crucial areas where the Programme has helped bring about change and proposes action to be taken by the EU institutions, Member States and other stakeholders to strengthen its impact in the future.

Reaching out to under-represented groups

Ensuring a fair and equal chance for everyone requires the recognition of the different groups who are under-represented in Erasmus schemes. Actions that could be taken include designing loans and grants to allow a wider range of students to participate, organising outreach activities in schools to attract a more diverse Erasmus population and ensuring that regional, national and European programmes become more flexible, to cater for the needs of a broader student population.

Increasing appeal by boosting results

To increase the Programme's attractiveness and appeal, it needs to focus more on the potential it offers to improve academic quality and benefit the higher education institutions, staff and students that take part. This could include improving language teaching, removing administrative obstacles and offering more flexible learning options to boost student interest and encourage wider participation from a more diverse population.

Forging new learning paths and virtual exchanges

Institutions should offer international experience to as many students as possible. One way of doing this is through information and communication technology, which fosters new ways of learning, as well as virtual mobility, either on its own or combined with physical mobility. Action is needed to create innovative new learning paths. For example, national agencies, Erasmus coordinators, staff and students could take part in a virtual community to build bilateral partnerships and share Erasmus experience and best practices in studies and traineeships.

Giving credit for Study and work abroad

The success of Erasmus depends on students gaining recognition in their home institution for what they achieve during their stay abroad. Higher education institutions have the tools to do this, but their implementation could be improved especially thanks to more support from the European Commission. Relations with partner institutions could also be strengthened to ensure that recognition is clear and straightforward.

Building on the Erasmus experience

An Erasmus experience benefits the individual and his or her social, academic and professional networks. It enriches the local community, home institution and European integration. Greater follow-up of Erasmus participants is needed to encourage them to provide feedback and share their experiences and build on the cultural, social, linguistic and professional benefits gained.

Staff exchanges and the multiplier effect

Erasmus staff exchanges are often overlooked yet staff mobility makes an enormous contribution, bringing fresh ideas for new curricula and teaching methods, enhancing partnerships with institutions abroad and inspiring students to adopt a more European and global perspective. Staff mobility needs to be better incorporated into institutions' international strategies, valued more highly by institution leaders and staff encouraged to take part using incentives.

The complete manifesto is available at
http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/publications_en.htm

ERASMUS MANIFESTO

developed by the 66 Erasmus students and staff ambassadors for the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus Programme in 2012



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