

Lesson 2: Outgoing mobility and its benefits for students, teachers, and universities

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Introduction:

This lesson will start with the description of the EU mobility programmes, especially outgoing mobility from MED countries. The role of intercultural, international office (IRO) of home university and host university and the support to mobility will be discussed. Then we will focus on how outgoing mobility can be beneficial for the students and staff, increasing their skills and intercultural awareness. We'll also discuss the benefits of sending university (institution, academic and administrative staff, students when the staff and students return to home university).

This topic is elaborated in the following chapters:

- 1) About Mobility in MED countries: some data and good practices (Erasmus + programme and some useful data and good practices from MED Countries: Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon)
- 2) The role of intercultural, international offices (IRO) in supporting the mobility
- 3) Benefits for students (personal, study, employability)
- 4) Benefits for sending university: academic and administrative staff (personal, administrative, teaching and research level)

1. About Mobility in MED countries: some data and good practices (Erasmus + programme and some useful data and good practices from MED Countries: Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon)

• The Erasmus + Programme:

The Erasmus Plus Programme is a leading programme in European Union, offering university students the possibility of a study period abroad. It is based on the results of more than 30 years of European programmes in education, training, youth and sport, and has both an intra-European and international partnership dimension.¹

¹ European Commission, Erasmus+ - Programme Guide 2021 v2, 2021

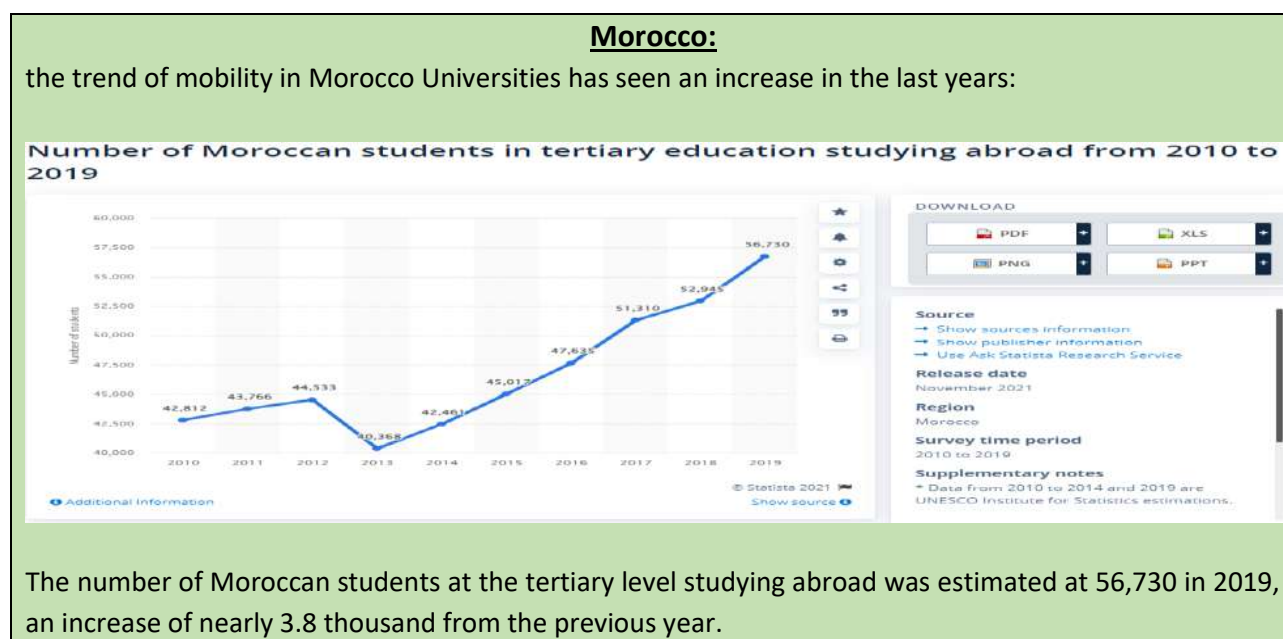
Since its launch in 1987, the programme has supported the mobility of **3.3 million students and 470.000 teachers**. In 2013-2014, **34 countries** participated in the programme.²

The Erasmus project was created to **educate** future generations of citizens on the idea of European belonging. Since its creation, it has mobilised more than a million students within the European Community. From the outset, in fact, the main objective of Erasmus has been quantitative, i.e. to achieve a substantial increase in student mobility to train human resources suited to the future needs of the Community, moving towards the democratisation of university studies, and precisely towards a Europe of citizens. This goal has always been geared towards the labour market and accompanied by qualitative imperatives, i.e. making full use of the potential and balance of cooperation.^{3 4 5}

Quantitative and qualitative studies and reports produced by the European Commission specify that these benefits are to be understood not only as a set of practical and professional skills of the individual (the so-called **hard skills**) but also as individual characteristics linked to the personality (**the soft skills**), such as independence, self-confidence, problem-solving ability or awareness of one's limits and strengths. It is a helpful well-developed model to keep in mind for mobility-related activities.

- **Some useful data and good practices from MED Countries: Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon:**

Internationalisation is high on the agenda of higher education institutions across the world. Previous research on national and local policies surrounding this phenomenon has identified different discourses of internationalisation, which may affect practices such as student mobility. To understand better the role of student mobility in practice, it can be useful to describe also some trends of mobility in some MED countries to offer a framework on the situation.



² European Commission, Erasmus Plus - Facts and Figures available at https://ec.europa.eu/education/library/statistics/erasmus-plus-facts-figures_en.pdf

³ European Commission, The Erasmus impact study - Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions: an executive summary, 2015

⁴European Commission – Erasmus Plus - Facts and Figures available at https://ec.europa.eu/education/library/statistics/erasmus-plus-facts-figures_en.pdf

⁵ European Commission - Study on the impact of Erasmus+ higher education partnerships and knowledge alliances at local, national and European levels on key higher education policy priorities, Final report, 2019

Internationally outbound students from Morocco increased from 42,812 in 2010 to the 2019 figure. By contrast, the number of international students enrolled in Morocco was lower.

Several actions are undertaken at the national level to build and strengthen the relationship to foster mobility outside Morocco.

An excellent page to check to find updates and valuable information on mobility programme development in Morocco is the ESN Morocco page: <https://esn.org/news/establishing-sustainable-erasmus-community-morocco>.

Egypt:

The number of Egyptian students at the tertiary level studying abroad amounted to 38,667 in 2018.

North America and Western Europe were the most popular destinations, with around 16.1 thousand students. The Arab States followed with roughly 14 thousand Egyptian enrollees in 2017.

OTHER STATISTICS ON THE TOPIC



Many websites offer further information on mobility from Egypt, also connected to Erasmus + Network. Additional info available here:

<https://www.erasmusplus-egypt.eu/index.php/en/about-us/who-are-we>

Jordan:

Some good practices developed in the Jordan context, especially capacity building and "virtual mobility", should be mentioned. For example:

- **Jovital**⁶(ERASMUS+ CBHE Project on Virtual Mobility, Jordan Opportunity for virtual innovative teaching and learning). Under the umbrella of the JOVITAL project, a series of staff training workshops has been conducted in Jordan on topics related to the use of ICT in Higher Education and academic exchange using virtual mobility. Here is the link with some useful information: <https://jovital.eu/>.
- **JUST**, one of the leading universities in Jordan, to the current epidemiological conditions, decided to carry out the mobility on 2021 via video conference. The following activities were carried out during the virtual mobility:
 - a Virtual tour of the JUST campus in Irbid, Jordan,
 - an up-to-date review and evaluation of the cooperation between Academia and JUST,
 - planning of activities for the new Erasmus+ programming period 2021-2027,
 - Capacity Building projects,
 - Centres of Vocational Excellence projects,
 - Student and staff mobilities under call KA107,
 - overview and comparison of the education systems in Jordan and Slovenia,
 - the transition to digital and online education in terms of student well-being, digital infrastructure and accessibility challenges,
 - training in the use of virtual and augmented reality in education,

⁶ Jovital project: <https://jovital.eu/>

- evaluating and learning about good practices in the use of technology in education,
- getting to know the management and professional services of JUST.

They plan to re-establish physical mobility in the new academic year and apply jointly for development projects.

Here is the video: <https://www.academia.si/en/erasmus-plus-en/virtual-mobility-at-the-leading-jordanian-university-the-jordan-university-of-science-and-technology>.

Tunisia:

In the last years, a relatively minor percentage of Tunisian Students have been involved in outbound mobility.



WORLD DATA ATLAS > TUNISIA > TOPICS > EDUCATION > TERTIARY EDUCATION



Tunisia - Outbound mobility in tertiary education

5.0

In 2013, outbound mobility in tertiary education for Tunisia was 5 %. Outbound mobility in tertiary education of Tunisia fell gradually from 6 % in 1999 to 5 % in 2013.

(%)

The description is composed by our digital data assistant.

in 2013

What is outbound mobility in tertiary education?

Outbound mobility ratio (%). Tertiary is the number of students from a given country studying abroad as a percentage of the total tertiary enrolment in that country.

The 42 international exchanges give an excellent example of the increase in mobility between Tunisia and Italy in 2 years had been carried out among Italian and Tunisian Universities, in the framework of the **International Credit Mobility project COMMO III**, co-funded by the European Commission and part of the KA107 of the Erasmus+ Programme.

Through the mobility and the experiences exchanged within COMMO, its members improved their skills in managing international relations and their related issues. Indeed, they benefitted from the "knowledge sharing" by hosting and sending students, professors, International Relations officers.

COMMO is a consortium of several Italian universities and coordinated by UNIMED.

Further information is available here: <https://www.uni-med.net/mobility-between-tunisia-and-italy-42-new-exchanges-in-two-years/>.⁷

Here are some helpful links and best practices:

- ICMED Project https://www.icmedproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WP4_POLICY-BRIEF_TUNISIA.pdf
- <https://www.erasmusplus.tn/Mobilit%C3%A9s-Internationales-Staff.php>

Lebanon:

In Lebanon, there are some exchange programmes. Some of them are well developed. Here are some valuable links and guidelines useful for exchange programmes:

- <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/content/836>

The guidelines shared also provided useful information on how Lebanese students should act to see what International Credits Mobility projects with Programme country institutions offer scholarships and how to apply.

⁷ Unimed

Here is a table given to all the Lebanese institutions in Credit Mobility Partnership with Programme countries (European) Institutions: <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/content/840>⁸

Actually, 552 International Credit Mobility projects involving Lebanese Higher Education Institutions have been contracted during the last six calls 2015-2020 with €15,842,454 to finance 4632 mobilities as follows :

- 2972 outgoing mobilities to Programme Countries
- 1660 incoming mobilities to Lebanon

Unfortunately, the current critical situation of the country has raised the need of an increasing need of internationalisation also at home.

2. The role of intercultural, international offices (IRO) in supporting the mobility

In a very simplified way, we can say that the International Relations Office at university is a unit in the academic field engaged in internationalisation. This unit plays a role in bridging the student community and foreign lecturers who want to gain more experience and support under several aspects outgoing and ingoing mobility.

The Office of International Relations and Mobility exercises its powers in promoting, monitoring and operational support of cooperation and internationalisation activities, in line with the university's strategy. A good starting point to act at best is to "familiarise" with the mobility student (or staff member), meaning:

- What is a mobility student?

They are international students, who have been admitted to do a period of mobility during one, or two semesters, under a specific mobility programme (Erasmus + Program, Cooperation Protocols, National Programs or others);

- What is supposed to do an IRO Office (in general)?

An IRO office is supposed to cover some aspects of cooperation and administration.

For Cooperation:

- supporting activities related to initiating and coordinating international cooperation of the home University with international universities and research institutions at the university-wide level;
- preparing bilateral agreements on scientific cooperation realised at the university-wide level;
- maintaining the database of all the University bilateral agreements with international universities and research institutions and the registration of bilateral agreements in the archives;
- coordinating exchange within bilateral agreements at the university-wide level and providing administrative and financial assistance to staff, PhD candidates and students;
- providing administrative support to the Rector's Committee for Bilateral Grants for Students and PhD Candidates;
- providing administrative support for mobility programmes and governmental scholarship holders
- organising training and meetings for international relations officers from partner universities;
- providing reception, service and co-organisation of delegations and visits from foreign units, coordinated by Rector's Office or Office of the Vice-Rector for International Relations;
- organising and co-organising university-wide international events;

⁸ Erasmus + Lebanon <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/content/840>

- involvement in the activities of international cooperation networks coordinated at the university-wide level;
- implementing international educational and mobility projects with foreign entities;
- the organisation of the recruitment process for the mobility of staff,
- administrative and financial support to staff qualifies for international mobilities,
- preparation of mobility financing agreements for staff,
- cooperating with coordinators of partner universities within the scope of the agreements,
- preparing mobility reports for the exchange programme (ex. Erasmus+)
- preparing reports on international cooperation within the scope of the IRO's tasks;
- publishing IRO's periodical Newsletter (in English);
- spreading the word among students, PhD students and researchers and staff about study offers, scholarship opportunities, language courses, summer/winter schools, international conferences and other foreign offers (mailing list and posts on social media);
- IRO's website administration, along with International Visitors' Office, HR Guide, the Visiting Professors Program etc.

For Administration:

- providing administrative and financial assistance to all qualified for international mobility, i.e., staff, PhD candidates and students of the university,
- accepting mobility application forms and their verification,
- defining mobility procedures and settlement of advance payments,
- information on the rules of calculation of expenditures on mobility,
- mobility database,
- collaboration with the Office of Human Resources,
- international insurance for staff, PhD candidates and students,
- financial assistance to mobility
- coordinating the collaboration with travel agencies;
- organising tenders and call notices for the booking of plane, train and bus tickets;
- direct collaboration with the airlines.

3. Benefits for students (personal, study, employability)

If we were to list the benefits of students studying abroad, for a more or less brief period, we could certainly say that the benefits are many and vary from the personal sphere to the educational one, up to positively influencing their chances of finding employment.

Of course, The overall objective of increasing outgoing mobility should be to contribute to establishing an Education Area as well as strengthen the link between education and research, to foster the critical thinking skills of students from all disciplines, and at all levels (including bachelor, master and doctoral levels). The objective should also be to foster employability, social inclusion, civic engagement, innovation and environmental sustainability in Europe and beyond.

To study or train abroad during their studies in fact:

- expose students to different views, knowledge, teaching and research methods as well as work practices in their study field;
- help students to develop their transversal skills such as communication, language, problem-solving, inter-cultural skills and research skills;
- support students in developing their forward-looking skills, such as digital skills that will enable them to tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow;
- facilitate personal development, such as adapting to new situations and self-confidence.

Furthermore, we know that the world has become so connected that all industries and sectors need skilled professionals working efficiently in various situations and locations. Studying abroad exposes students to the world's diversity and allows them to develop these skills to enter the job market with confidence.

So it's clear that Going abroad to study or train helps people develop their professional, social and intercultural skills and enhance their employability. Higher education students who undertake a mobility period abroad are more likely to find employment one year after graduation. As it is shown in a European Commission report⁹ on this topic:

- 93% of the students report that they have a greater appreciation for the value of other cultures after their mobility period.
- 91% improve their language skills
- 80% feel that their problem-solving skills improved following a mobility period.
- 80% were employed within three months of graduation
- 72% said their experience abroad helped them get their first job.

This can apply on a wider scale. Developing new forms of cross-border cooperation will help to improve the quality of higher education and facilitate the recognition of academic qualifications gained abroad.

Besides the important aspect related to employability, it is also crucial to focus on the opportunity of educational growth pertaining to the approach with a different teaching/learning environment and, of course, the impact that mobility can have deeper in the life of individuals. Mobility in this sense can also be considered as:

- a guidance tool to support people in finding their motivation or in reorientation;
- an occasion to find a sense of direction or belonging while engaging in the field of interest or a chance to clarify other unconsidered possibilities and open up to new choices or new fields so that upon return, participants can make informed decisions about their future educational and/or career choice.
- a way towards reactivation: when people struggle to enter or re-enter the labour market, moving elsewhere is a solution to get out of a situation of fragility and instability; it is a way to break a circle and go ahead
- an act of liberation for those people who need to escape from a situation of deep discouragement and want to enter a new context where they can get rid of their past selves and be looked at in new and different ways.

In this framework, IRO offices and institutions must provide the student with clear information, educational, administrative support to motivate them to participate in mobility outgoing programmes.

Good communication between the IRO of the host university and the IRO of the receiving university remains crucial. Cross-communication and a clear agreement that is beneficial to the mover are the basis for ensuring a successful outcome and protecting the interests of the student, faculty or staff member spending time at another university. Furthermore, validating and considering in the same way the path taken is crucial, as is allowing the relationship between the two universities to strengthen and improve academically, administratively and logistically.

⁹ Mobility and cooperation articles: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/mobility-and-cooperation_en

4. Benefits for sending university: academic and administrative staff (personal, administrative, teaching)

Another benefit type of outgoing mobility is that related to enabling **any staff (administrative, teaching) to teach or train abroad as part of their professional development** to share their expertise, experience new teaching environments; acquire new innovative pedagogical and curriculum design skills and digital skills; connect with their peers., exchange good practices and enhance cooperation between higher education institutions.

Learning mobility programmes are seen as having several benefits. Amongst these, mobility is seen as an effective means of enhancing intercultural understanding amongst young people. Part of this relates to the potential impact it can have on people's attitudes. Contact amongst members of the same "working group" (e.g. administrative or professors expert on the same topic) can improve intergroup attitudes and reduce negative stereotyping if four key conditions are met¹⁰:

- equal status
- common goals,
- intergroup cooperation
- Institutional support.

Although learning is not a given and the extent to which it occurs depends on many factors, there is a basic assumption underlying the scheme that increasing **intercultural contact facilitates intercultural learning**.

In sum, research confirms the genuine impact of real-life intercultural contact on intercultural learning. Furthermore, it shows how this impact can be enhanced through institutional support and the integration of intercultural learning into the curriculum. ^{11. 12.}

Listening to the interviews with individuals who did a mobility experience and the results they achieved and bring back with them at the end of the mobility, it emerges clearly how the intercultural enrichment obtained gave them many benefits, and how these benefits can be applied for the improvement of their local environment.

Academics and staff who go abroad can gain more extensive expertise from training/ teaching abroad, which is relevant to their current job and supports at best their professional development.

But what they bring back to their Origin Country and which benefits can provide to their "home University":

- Best practices discovered and new ideas.
- Inspiration gained by new colleagues and different perspectives.
- expertise and experience
- new ways of teaching, new tools and technologies in several fields
- Knowledge of a different education or administrative system.
- Wider international network contacts
- possibilities for future collaboration and partnership.
- new culture/ language knowledge

¹⁰ H.E. Messelink, J. Van Maele & H. Spencer-Oatey (2015), Intercultural competencies: what students in study and placement mobility should be learning,

file:///C:/Users/Sab.Brillante/Downloads/Messelink_Van+Maele_Spencer+Oatey_Intercultural+competencies_1501.pdf

¹¹ *Ibidem*

¹² Messelink, A. and J. D. Ten Thije. (2012) *"Unity in Super-diversity: European Capacity and Intercultural Inquisitiveness of the Erasmus Generation 2.0."* Dutch Journal for Applied Linguistics

Here below there are some useful links and videos of practical experiences to go deeper into the topic discussed:

Interview to Erasmus Students	http://erasmus-erasmus.blogspot.com/p/interviste-di-studenti-erasmus.html
Erasmus student [Interview Fast & Curious]	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOOof_ByGl8Y
Erasmus Days - Interview with Erasmus+ students	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11tQrEe8Xj4
Why study Abroad Marina Meijer	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1Zha2CrJZ0
Erasmus Experience 4 Months in Lisbon	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAQpgnEa51k
Study Abroad - Student Experiences - University of Sheffield	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bgf6WIBgZAO
Go international: How studying abroad can change your life Alexander Au.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BcaB4PiecU

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Comunicazione della Commissione Europea, *Realizzare uno spazio europeo dell'apprendimento permanente*, Novembre 2001.

European Commission, *Erasmus Impact Study confirms EU student exchange scheme boosts employability and job mobility*, 2014

European Commission, *Study on the impact of Erasmus+ higher education partnerships and knowledge alliances at local, national and European levels on key higher education policy priorities*, Final report, 2019

European Commission, *The Erasmus impact study - Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions: executive summary*, 2015

H.E. Messelink, J. Van Maelebe & H. Spencer-Oatey (2015), *Intercultural competencies: what students in study and placement mobility should be learning*, file:///C:/Users/Sab.Brillante/Downloads/Messelink_Van+Maele_Spencer+Oatey_Intercultural+competencies_1501.pdf

Luca Raffini e Luca Alteri, (2007), *Il programma Erasmus: significati e sviluppi* in "Cosmopolis"

Messelink, A. and J. D. Ten Thije. (2012) *"Unity in Super-diversity: European Capacity and Intercultural Inquisitiveness of the Erasmus Generation 2.0."*

Dutch Journal for Applied Linguistics 1: 81–101. Accessed July 14, 2014. <http://www.jantenthije.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/12-messeling-tenthije-diversity.pdf>

Pawel Sobkowiak, (2019), *The impact of studying abroad on students' intercultural competence: An interview study in "Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching."*

Tatiana Baranova, Aleksandra Kobicheva, E. Y. Tokareva. *The impact of Erasmus program on intercultural communication skills of students*, "E3S Web of Conferences 164, 1201", 2020

Websites:

Academia Erasmus +: <https://www.academia.si/en/erasmus-plus-en/virtual-mobility-at-the-leading-jordanian-university-the-jordan-university-of-science-and-technology>

E+ Egypt: <https://www.erasmusplus-egypt.eu/index.php/en/about-us/who-are-we>

E+ Lebanon: <http://erasmusplus-lebanon.org/content/840>

Erasmus + mobility: <https://www.erasmusplus.tn/Mobilit%C3%A9s-Internationales-Staff.php>

Ghent University: <https://www.ugent.be/en/ghentuniv/principles/internationalisation/iro>

ICMED Project: https://www.icmedproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WP4_POLICY-BRIEF_TUNISIA.pdf

Krakow University: https://dwm.uj.edu.pl/en_GB/o-dziale/zadania

Jovital: <https://jovital.eu/>

Statista maps: <https://www.statista.com/map/asia/lebanon/>

UE IE Global: <https://www.ul.ie/global/outgoing-students/teacher-and-staff-mobility-under-erasmus/teacher-and-staff-mobility>

UniMed: <https://www.uni-med.net/student-mobility-in-morocco-learn-more-on-the-erasmus-moroccan-network/>

UniParthenope: <https://international.uniparthenope.it/international-agreements/>