

Workshop 2:

Welcome to Europe

Integration and representation of mobile students

Building a „Quality Reception Charter“ for mobile students?

The idea of the workshop was to move forward in the discussion of students' mobility by discussing more precisely the topic of mobile students' integration and representation. The idea of a "quality reception charter" that had been discussed within the Mobility Working Group should also be taken into account. Below you will find our report.

Overview:

- Participants
- Questions of interest
- Structure of Workshop
- Evaluation
- Communiqué (results of the workshop)

Participants

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Thorhildur, SHI (Iceland)
Almira, SUS (Serbia)
Nemanja, SUS (Serbia and Montenegro)
Will, NUS (Eire)
Ansje, ISO (Netherlands)
Maher, FAGE (France)
Drazcu, CSC (Croatia)
Johanna, SYL (Finland)
Jasha, IGLYO

Workshop Chair:
Nele, fzs (Germany)

Questions of interest

social requirements:

- What kind of "social requirements" are necessary that foreign students are able to integrate without any problems?
- How can we help to promote the necessity of these requirements?
- What about differences between Eastern/Western and Northern/Southern countries concerning the quality and the amount of existing offers?
- What are differences in existing law regulations in the respective countries of the participants?
- What are the main problems and what could be possible demands (both on a national and European level)?

academic requirements

- How to integrate in a foreign HEI?
- What is the role of the sending/ receiving HEI?
- How it is possible that there is a representation of foreign student`s?

cultural requirements:

- What is intercultural competence?
- How to teach and learn it?
- How it is possible that students contribute?
- How to promote language learning?
- With what kind of problems are foreign students confronted in society?
- How actively reduce racism and xenophobia in society?

Structure of the workshop

Below there is a short overview about the structure of the workshop. The results are summed up in the attached paper "Integration and Representation of Mobile Students". This paper could be used when working on the mobility handbook. It provides some proposals and ideas for local and national unions of students. It could also be possible to re-discuss it and to pass it as a communiqué on one of the following board meetings.

First session: Introduction and expectations

(Monday afternoon)

Every participant was asked to tell his/her expectations to the workshop. After a brief introduction to the topic we formed groups of two people in order to discuss the question why integration is important for students' mobility.

After this we separated in two groups. The first one was discussing on the topic of necessity of integration on a micro level. The second group was dealing with integration on a macro level.

Both groups presented their results in plenary:

Micro level:

- Student well being (personal, academic, cultural)
- Cultural aspect; greater insight, experiences
- New professional skills
- Language learning

Macro level:

- brain gain / brain drain
- Common European Cultural Area
- Common EHEA
- Reducing xenophobia
- Reduction of drop-out rates
- knowledge based society

Within this first session we also put a schedule for the further workshop:

- Why integration?
- What kind of integration? What is needed?
- What is the role of students unions? What about representation of mobile students?
- How to implement our ideas of integration and representation?

Second Session: Development of a concept of integration and representation

(Tuesday afternoon)

Based on the discussion of the way before we tried to figure out a definition for integration and we worked out more clearly, why we do see the need for a balanced integration. We decided on the following:

Balanced integration means 'to give' and 'to receive' as well as 'to be open'. It means coming together from both sides (domestic and foreign) and on all levels (students, student unions, HEI, governments, society...) We have to take into account the existing different backgrounds and expectations on both sides and all levels.

Balanced integration where all actors are satisfied, has to be based on deliberate internationalisation (i.e. clear motivation and reflected aims).

Some of these aims could be the following:

- Integration can improve the quality of education. There are different teaching and learning methods which make it difficult to work together without support for integration. Also the contents are different. So people can learn from each other, get inspirations etc. You get more feedback and more diverse feedback if there are students from different backgrounds.
- Integration can expand the knowledge base as different people can add different experiences and different ideas. There is the possibility to get rid of a "one-culture focus" and in some parts there is the possibility of development cooperation.
- Integration can lead to attractiveness/ accessibility of HEI / country. There are various groups that are discriminated against and that have only limited access to higher education. If mobile students are integrated this might make it easier to integrate other minorities as well.
- Integration will support equal opportunities for everybody, social justice and it is the basis for participation. If students are not integrated in all fields, they have only limited rights and opportunities and also only limited possibilities to participate.
- Integration can lead to personal enrichment and a less xenophobic world. Being integrated in another society broadens your mind. You will get access to people from other parts of the world. It also means that a kind of network is established between people of different cultures. This is the basis for communication. There is the possibility to talk instead of misunderstanding.
- Integration can help to develop valuable qualifications such as intercultural competence.

After the discussion we did a role play in order to find out what kind of services are available in different HEI and what services are most needed. Three of the participants were asked to present their home universities. The other participants were put in the role of students, who shall decide where to go for studying. They worked out a questionnaire and started their interviews. Afterwards they gave a brief feedback in plenary why they would decide for a certain university and why not.

After the role play we were looking at the so-called Erasmus Student Charta. The Erasmus Student Charta is a listing of rights and obligations you do have when studying as an Erasmus student in a foreign country. We agreed that the points that are mentioned in this Charta are not sufficient. They might lead to academic integration, but nearly anything is said concerning the topic of social integration. Also the point of representation is missing. The role of students unions is not mentioned at all.

Based on these reflections the participants were asked to split in groups in order to work out a better Charta, which is based on the expectations and responsibilities of students unions for students mobility and which should apply for every mobile student – and not only the one who is studying with an Erasmus program.

All groups presented their ideas in plenary (see result paper below) We discussed them and tried to work out a structure for a communiqué on this topic. We decided that we do not want

to produce a “Quality Reception Charter” as we see such a Charta much too limited and inflexible and if it is only looking from the “receiving side” it does not take into account the more complex situation of students mobility.

Structure of planned communiqué:

- General introduction (why mobility, removal of obstacles for mobility)
- Integration of mobile students (responsibility of HEI and governments)
- Integration of mobile students (responsibility of students unions)
- Representation of mobile students
- Possibilities for ESIB, NUS's and local students unions

Third session: Final discussion and conclusion

(Wednesday morning)

We discussed once more the different parts of the planned communiqué in smaller groups and also in plenary. In the afternoon there was time to bring the points together and to write the whole communiqué. We met once more in the evening in order to make the final discussion. We also decided how to do the presentation of the workshop results.

Evaluation of the workshop:

In general participants were satisfied with the workshop. However they were mentioning that during the workshop they did not really see the whole idea of the workshop. So they were surprised when we achieved to write the paper in the end.

It was also said that it is difficult to deal with the fact that there are always at board meetings a lot of newcomers. Some participants were criticising that not everybody was prepared for the discussions (e.g. not knowing ESIB policy papers etc).

From the perspective of chairing the workshop I would agree that this was a problem.

However I liked the discussions in the workshop and I hope that the results of the workshop will contribute for the future work of ESIB. I would further suggest that ESIB tries to organise the workshops in a way that there are not two or more participants from one country in the same workshop.

Communiqué on Integration and Representation of Mobile Students

Today more and more students are becoming mobile. However increased mobility does not automatically lead to integration. There is still no balanced way of integration. Students (as well as HEI and society in general) have different aims and expectations. As there is not one homogenous group of mobile students the situation is getting even more complex. All groups that are involved do not have the same goals and backgrounds. Mobility or internationalisation is seen as “attractive and fancy” and there is often no reflection of motivation and aims.

It is for these reasons that ESIB has worked out a detailed policy concerning students mobility. We have e.g. called for the removal of obstacles to mobility such as tuition fees, strict visa regulations and lack of social services. In order to continue the discussion ESIB would also like to point out the need for integration and representation of mobile students, because mobility without integration and representation would mean a waste of potential not only for the individual students, but also for higher education in general and for society as a whole.

Balanced integration and why it is needed

Balanced integration means 'to give' and 'to receive' as well as 'to be open'. It means coming together from both sides (domestic and foreign) and on all levels (students, student unions,

HEI, governments, society...) We have to take into account the existing different backgrounds and expectations on both sides and all levels. Balanced integration where all actors are satisfied, has to be based on deliberate internationalisation (i.e. clear motivation and reflected aims).

Some of these aims could be the following:

- Integration can improve the quality of education. There are different teaching and learning methods which make it difficult to work together without support for integration. Also the contents are different. So people can learn from each other, get inspirations etc. You get more feedback and more diverse feedback if there are students from different backgrounds.
- Integration can expand the knowledge base as different people can add different experiences and different ideas. There is the possibility to get rid of a “one-culture focus” and in some parts there is the possibility of development cooperation.
- Integration can lead to attractiveness/ accessibility of HEI / country. There are various groups that are discriminated against and that have only limited access to higher education. If mobile students are integrated this might make it easier to integrate other minorities as well.
- Integration will support equal opportunities for everybody, social justice and it is the basis for participation. If students are not integrated in all fields, they have only limited rights and opportunities and also only limited possibilities to participate.
- Integration can lead to personal enrichment and a less xenophobic world. Being integrated in another society broadens your mind. You will get access to people from other parts of the world. It also means that a kind of network is established between people of different cultures. This is the basis for communication. There is the possibility to talk instead of misunderstanding.
- Integration can help to develop valuable qualifications such as intercultural competence.

Responsibilities to balanced integration

All actors that are involved should feel responsible for the success of integration.

HEI should for example provide written information on social, cultural and academic life in different languages. They should organize education in a way that local and mobile students study together as much as possible. If HEI provides housing, they should strive for integrating mobile students with local students. It is especially necessary to provide good quality language courses.

HEI should also feel responsible for outgoing students. They shall provide coaching on integration, which has to include at least language training and social, cultural and academic information on the respective country or HEI.

There is the need to discuss the differences between horizontal and vertical mobility in regard of the portability of social services.

Below is a list of some of the possible measures, which should be carried out by HEI supported by students unions

Promote open-mindedness in HEI and not only in preparation for receiving foreign students, but also in sending students.

- free language courses
- help for cultural preparation and guidance (e.g. preparation course before going abroad. You should also learn, how your own culture works)

- help for re-integration

Help and support for incoming students

- clear contact person / central office which can provide all kind of information and services
- information about university and country in different languages
- help with bureaucracy etc.
- tutoring
- offer of language and cultural preparation courses

Provide diverse activities and strive to avoid separation of foreign and domestic students

- language barrier has to be overcome in order to provide the basis for participation (not only language courses, but also translation of official papers. It is the same demand to student unions)
- in order to avoid separation you could provide “tandem language courses”
- governments / HEI should provide official papers in different languages

Promote equal opportunities for integration and representation for everybody

- no special selection criteria, but equal access
- providing of social services (e.g. accommodation ...)
- equal access for participation also in student unions

Promote discussions about obstacles to integration

- Platform of stakeholders in order to discuss of obstacles and to work out solutions
- no hierarchy between different actors and levels
- transparency between different levels
- discussions in order to work out demands for legal changes
- active involvement of students on all levels
- exchange between incoming/ outgoing students

Work for a more open-minded and more international education/ society in general

(The whole education system should provide intercultural education. Students should be aware of the responsibility for the education of teachers)

- create intercultural education and experience
- introduce intercultural education in all parts of the education system
- promote language course education
- broaden to scope of courses / programmes from a national to an international focus
- create more inter-university cooperation
- provide platforms for international projects and seminars
- promote an international body of students and teachers
- communicate positive images

Support anti-racist work

- structural analyse of situation / work for legal changes
- concrete help and support for victims

Individual students should be aware of their role and responsibility as mobile students.

Before embarking on such an adventure of internationalisation, the students must do some background or research work. Studying the social/cultural and the academic specifics of the country and the institution the student is applying for and perhaps attending language classes will allow him/her to have an easier integration. The preparation of all the necessary documents is also very important.

During the program, the mobile student must be an open-minded person, capable of integrating in all aspects of the institution and the society. He/she should also attempt to use all the facilities available and have the capacity to socialize. The student must also be ready

to share information and experiences and accept in a best possible way the social and cultural ideas that are presented to him/her.

If returning home the mobile students should be aware of their responsibility for the success of the various mobility programs. Back in their home countries, these students have an important role of promoting mobility and be ready to share the academic and social experience that he/she has brought back particularly in form of a report, which will help students in the future who are considering studying abroad.

Also the students belonging to the host countries do have an important role:

They have to develop activities, that will allow mobile students to share experiences and cultural and academic differences. The good environment between colleges is an important factor in the future success or failure of mobile students integration. The partnership should be so strong that host students should apply on a voluntary basis to make the role of "international brothers or sisters".

Role of student unions and representation of mobile students

In the present situation there is very often a lack of participation from the side of students unions both on a local and national level.

On the one hand domestic student unions are often not participating in developing a concept of internationalisation. On the other hand there is also only poor representation of the interest of foreign/mobile student within the students unions. e.g. they do have the right to vote, but they are not encouraged to run for election.

ESIB calls upon students unions to actively participate in the discussion of internationalisation and to promote balanced integration.

ESIB therefore asks NUS to foster the establishment of executive groups on a local level that deal with practical problems and mobile student well-being - no matter if they are free movers or part of organized exchange programs.

Local students unions should be encouraged to build up a representation committee of foreign students. Such a committee can promote the cooperation between mobile students and will therefore foster the participation of mobile students not only within the HEI but also within society as a whole. In order to guarantee a successful outcome, it is necessary that the local students unions and the mobile students union are working closely together. The existence of a mobile students union does not mean that there is no longer the need for a direct representation of mobile students within existing students institutions. However because of the variety among mobile students the direct representation will always be limited which justifies the added organisation.

A mobile students union should always be multinational. Existing initiatives of mobile students from specific countries shall work together.

ESIB calls on NUS's to build up mobile students representation committees also on a national level like it has already be done in several countries. A representation of mobile students on a national level is necessary to promote and foster the work of mobile students initiatives on a local level and influencing the laws and regulations that are set for mobile students. Such a organisation of mobile students can have a central effect on decisions that are taken.

If ESIB achieves to coordinate the work between all the different organisations, this can be seen as an important factor for the future development of internationalisation of HEI and society within ESIB's member countries.