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Implement the Strategic Plan of Educational and Creative Activities of the Faculty of Education, Palacký University in Olomouc

Improving the UPOL's Faculty of Education staff's support to outgoing Erasmus students

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Abstract

The study aim is to analyse the quality of the help and support provided by the UPOL's Faculty of Education staff to their outgoing Erasmus students. The researcher wants to understand how it could be improved, according to the experiences and advice of the voluntary Erasmus respondents. Adopting the grounded theory approach, the objectives of the research are to explore the Erasmus mobility experience, in the point of view of the students that have participated. Then, to formulate a theory that can illustrate the recommended enhancements that could potentially improve the staff's support. The method for collecting data is the semi-structured interview. To analyse the data the researcher is going to proceed with open and axial coding. As it is a qualitative research, the number of participants is small. They are students of the UPOL's Faculty of Education that have been on mobility from the academic year 2020-2021 and have successfully ended the experience. As conclusions, this thesis project has provided a valid overview of the Erasmus experience. The results of this thesis meet consistency with the findings of the research in this field. Despite its positive outcomes, the Erasmus mobility entails complications for the students. The interviewees reported many difficulties especially in regards with bureaucracy issues, and communication and cooperation with the universities' personnel.

Key words: Grounded theory; Erasmus; higher education; student mobility; personnel support.

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I, Davide Pavesi, declare that I have prepared the whole thesis including appendices independently and using only the sources cited in the text of the thesis and listed in the reference list.

Signature: *Davide Pavesi*

19/04/2023

Contents

Abbreviations

Covid-19 = COronaVIrus Disease 2019

Erasmus = EuRopean Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students

ESN = Erasmus Student Network

EU = European Union

UPOL = University Palacký of OLomouc

1. Introduction

1.1. Statement of the problem

Walking around university facilities, it is not uncommon to spot young students speaking different languages, and having different habits than the locals do. They are probably Erasmus students in their mobility periods. They might look like they are enjoying their lives, and having a low study workload, giving the impression that they are on vacation. Yet, they are most likely studying as much as the local classmates are, and to get to that point they have made notable efforts beforehand. Those alumni aspired to join the Erasmus programme. Consequently, they have tried hard to compromise agreements and deal bureaucracy.

The Erasmus programme is in constant expansion in terms of funds allocated and popularity, and the responsible figures foreseen a further growth in this direction (Gabriel, Christophidou, & Bassedas, 2022). In spite of the setback caused by Covid-19 pandemic, the Erasmus programme is again prospering. This healing process is valid for all the Erasmus partner countries. In the following paragraphs, the author of the thesis explains the three main reasons why this research is so relevant now more than ever.

First, the Covid-19 crisis has brought changes to the education systems (Guppy, et al., 2022; Cuhls, et al., 2022). In regards of Erasmus, in 2020 the universities were planning future distance offers for students that want to undertake a „virtual mobility programme" (Koris, Mato-Díaz, & Hernández-Nanclares, 2021), and the academic population foresees an increase of online and hybrid education (Guppy, et al., 2022). Furthermore, the education sector boosted the investments on technologies (Cuhls, et al., 2022). Concluding, the universities underwent a suffering period of „drastic budget reductions and

lingering institutional distrust" (Cuhls, et al., 2022, p. 17). Consequently, the adaptation with innovations and setbacks introduced by Covid-19 crisis is likely to play an important role for the students on mobility. The research in this field is still novice and unexplored, firstly because this pandemic is a recent event, and, secondly, investigating research in this area has been probably regarded as not lucrative.

In addition, the topic of „satisfaction feedback from students on Erasmus mobility" also lacks research (Abebe & Ford, 2019), especially qualitative research. The quantitative statistics about Erasmus mobility experiences are extensively documented by international agencies, and empirically illustrated by researchers. It is easy to access statistics and studies based on quantitative questionnaires; indeed, they provide vital information. Nonetheless, when exploring personal experiences, it is important to assume a point of view that considers the individual's perspective deeply. The qualitative approach has the potential of giving to the respondents space to explain their experiences with their own words, and not with numbers, as it would be with quantitative approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The unbiased open-ended questions of an interview would gather answers in the interviewees' point of view. Then, it is the researcher's role to interpret the data in a flexible way, empathising with the participants.

Last but not least, the UPOL's researchers have not investigated the mentioned aspects. The university's staff have to listen and comprehend its students, if the aim is to facilitate the mobility experience. What's more, they have to listen to the students' unbiased words, as responses of open-ended questions, not numbers as in pre-conceived questionnaires.

The mobility students see themselves as key advisors to ensure improvements to the system that arranges the international deal (Abebe & Ford, 2019). Therefore, with the students' willing support, the researcher is able to provide a detailed analysis of their mobility period, dig into their

experiences, and then explore the crucial points that the Faculty of Education's staff should pay attention to.

1.2. Background

This thesis does not aim to provide an exhaustive review in the matter of the literature on all the detailed and articulated aspects of Erasmus. The researcher dedicates the specific chapter Review of Literature to the analyse of relevant articles and documents. However, in this part, a general overview of the mentioned programme can be broadly beneficial to the readers to immerse in the context, and it is definitely in use to those that are new to the theme.

The impulses that moved the leaders of the European countries toward the ancestor programmes of Erasmus were supported by the hunger for peace and international collaboration that the population of the old continent had (Ruszel, 2018). This socio-political context was fertile for the growth of international agreements. Consequently, many international pilot programmes were born, before the success of Erasmus.

The first documented experimental precursors of the Erasmus programme are dated 1969 (Corradi, 2015). Anyhow, officially, the Erasmus programme was born in 1987. Since then, the numbers of organisations involved and the amount of allocated money are in constant increase. The Covid-19 pandemic crisis marked a pause to this growth. However, this event was not fatal. In fact, in the following years, the numbers have arisen again, and they are foreseen to be increasing, at least in the next five years (Gabriel, Christophidou, & Bassedas, 2022; Bassedas, 2022).

The name "Erasmus" is a short version of "EuRopean Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University

Figure 1. Erasmus+ logo, European Commission, retrived on April 8, 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/promo/erasmus-plus-toolkit-20131031_en.pdf

Students"[1]. It is named after Renaissance philosopher and Christian scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam. The Erasmus mobility programme is the widest network of collaborations between higher education institutions in Europe (Gadár, Kosztyán, Telcs, & Abonyi, 2020). Nonetheless, it also supports the mobility in other education levels: school education, vocational education and training, youth, and adult education. The individuals involved are part of both students' and staff's educational institution population. Anyway, this research is focused on the mobility experiences of higher education students.

Erasmus+ (Erasmus Plus) is the EU Programme that supports mobility experiences in the period 2021-2027. The name Erasmus+ was adopted in 2014 for the preceding interval 2014-2020. Previously it was called just "Erasmus"; the additional "plus" comes from the strengthening of the relations with educational institutions and initiatives (Corradi, 2015). The countries that can take part in all the initiatives of the Erasmus Programme are the EU members and the "third countries associated to the programme": Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, and Turkey[2].

Therefore, as an EU state member, the Czech Republic is implicitly an active member of the Erasmus programme. In its first period 1998-2010, the country was much more active on the outgoing students side, rather than incoming. In that whole period, the number of outgoing students was more that of two times than the incoming ones (Šteigrová, 2011). Later, the period 2014-2019 has seen an inversion of tendencies. Consequently, in the

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[1] "Erasmus", Enciclopedia Treccani, January 21, 2022, accessed April 7, 2023, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/erasmus/

[2] "Eligible Countries", European Commission website, March 7, 2023, accessed March 17, 2023 https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/eligible-countries

academic year 2018/2019, it has been registred the most significant gap between outgoing and incoming students: 7377 outgoing, and 11058 incoming (CZ National Agency, 2021). With the Covid-19 crisis, the total number of students on mobility dropped down. However, in the period between 01/01/2021 and 31/12/2021, the rate was proportionally similar to the year before the pandemic: 5545 outgoing and 8479 incoming (Bassedas, 2022).

According to 2016 reports, the percentage of Czech students that have been enrolled abroad is around the 8,2% of the national students population (Fischer, et al., 2016). This value shows that the Czech Republic is ranked close to the European member states average (Vögtle, 2019). As stated by 2019 factsheets, the three most important sending institutions in the Czech Republic are, predictably, Charles University of Prague, Masaryk University of Brno, and Palacký University of Olomouc (CZ National Agency, 2021).

Here below, a screenshot example of a few Erasmus+ offers of the UPOL's Faculty of Education[3]. The students that are interested can see the main features of the mobility offers. The details are, from the left, institution name, city, country, coordinator responsible, department, number of students, type of study programme, length of the sojourn, semester, and finally the subjects' topic of interest.

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[3] UPOL, Pedagogická fakulta, "zahraniční mobility", "Erasmus+", January 1, 2023, visited on April 7, 2023, https://www.pdf.upol.cz/student/zahranicni-mobility/

Erasmus+

výběrové řízení na zahraniční studijní pobyty na akademický rok 2023/2024

název instituce, město, stát	koordinátor na PdF UP, ústav/katedra	počet studentů typ studia (Bc., Mgr., NMgr. Ph.D.) – pro které studenty je výjezd možný délka pobytu (v měsících) semestr (v případě, že je studijní pobyt možný např. pouze v zimním semestru)	obor studia v zahraničí
Saxion University of Applied Sciences, Deventer, Holandsko	PaedDr. Alena Jůvová, Ph.D., UPSS	2 studenti (Bc.), 5 měsíců	pedagogické vědy, učitelství
University of Maribor, Faculty of Education, MARIBOR, Slovinsko	doc. PhDr. Jana Kantorová, Ph.D., UPSS	6 studentů (Bc., Mgr., Ph.D.), 10 měsíců	pedagogické vědy

Table 1: sample of UPOL Faculty of Education's Erasmus+ offers.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The study aim is to analyse the quality of the help and support provided by the UPOL's Faculty of Education staff to their outgoing Erasmus students, and to understand how it could be improved, according to the experiences and advice of the voluntary Erasmus respondents. The intent is to give feedback about the Erasmus mobility experiences to the responsible personnel. The objective is to develop a grounded theory that hypothesises how the UPOL's Faculty of Education staff could improve the support provided to their students on Erasmus mobility abroad. Having said that, with the grounded theory approach, the researcher is not expected to state rigid and narrow goals nor research questions, as he is normally supposed to do with other approaches (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015). Undoubtedly, the grounded theorist has to illustrate the general purpose of the study. Nonetheless, it has to keep a relatively broad range, in order not to "lock" the research into pre-assumptions that might be misleading (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015).

Therefore, as said, the focus of this research paper is to formulate a theory based on concrete experiences of students of the UPOL's Faculty of Education that would explain the successes and failures of the support provided by the Faculty's staff. A small group of mobility students that have been on Erasmus forms the sample. The main issues that they have met are going to represent the phenomena to be discussed. Adopting a grounded theory approach means not just exploring, but also explaining a phenomenon (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015). In order to do so, it is necessary to have the students' insights. They have experienced the mobility period; hence, they are able to give a personal assessment about the quality of the Faculty´s support. They can highlight what fulfilled their expectations and what failed them.

It is also significant that the chosen topic is "of interest to the researcher" (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015, p. 18). In this regard, the author of this thesis has experienced Erasmus mobility himself. However, some factors make his mobility precedents not undermining the developments of this study. Firstly, his experience was before the pandemic (during the second semester of the academic year 2017-2018), and, as illustrated in the Statement of the Problem, this aspect plays a relevant role in the importance of conducting the research. Secondly, he has been abroad with a different institution (during the bachelor's studies at the University of Bologna). This one is a significant factor too, for the research. In fact, the study is dedicated to improving the services of the UPOL, which has structures and dynamics considerably different from the other universities, and with distinct backgrounds, especially considering a qualitative point of view. Therefore, the topic is familiar and interesting to the researcher. Still, it does not imply severe negative pre-assumptions.

In this way, the purpose of study has been stated covering the features recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018, pp. 118-119).

1.4. Research questions

Once again, the grounded theory approach implies posing wide-ranging research questions that leave liberty to the developing of explanatory postulates (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015). Then, the research questions are going to change and evolve (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), becoming more "refined" in the process (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015, p. 22). The following research questions reflect the characteristics suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018, pp. 133-135)

How do the mobility students present their overall Erasmus experience?

- What factors motivate the mobility students to undertake the Erasmus experience?
- What aspects represent the most challenging issues in their personal lives, during the Erasmus mobility experience, according to the mobility students?
- How have the mobility students been supported during the whole Erasmus experience?
- What are the relevant aspects of the background context that have played a significant role in the whole Erasmus mobility experience for the mobility students?

How does the mobility student describe the support offered by the UPOL's Faculty of Education staff relating to the issues faced during the Erasmus experience?

- How have the mobility students been supported by the UPOL's personnel during the whole Erasmus experience?

- What issues do the mobility students reckon that the UPOL's staff are supposed to assist?

- What strategies do the students recommend the personnel to adopt, in order to comply with their needs?

- How would the students address the problems that they have met?

- What expected results do the students suppose that their ideal solutions would lead to?

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. Literature review in grounded theory

The researcher intends to proceed the study with a grounded theory approach. Adopting this approach, the researcher should not carry out a deep literature review (Glaser & Holton, 2007; Bell & Waters, Doing Your Research Project, 2010; Glaser B. G., 1998). However, the debate around it between international researchers is lively (Dunne, 2011; McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007).

Briefly, on the one hand, as Glaser (1998) explains, and Birks and Mills (2015) state, the traditional literature review analysis risks "contaminating" the grounded theory that is going to emerge from the data (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015, pp. 22-24). Therefore, the researcher is invited to review the literature just as long as the knowledge acquired does not risk influencing following steps of the research.

On the other hand, Dunne (2011), and McGhee, Marland, and Atkinson (2007) bring this argument to a debate. They state that grounded theorists should consider the option of reviewing the literature for their research beforehand, especially when the researcher is an academic student. However, after a prolonged consideration of arguments in favour and those against the initial review, the authors conclude that it all depends on personal circumstances, topic, and research (McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007). Another key-role factor is the timing of the decision of undertaking to research with the grounded theory approach: whether it was decided before or after analysing the existing research.

Made the due considerations, the researcher opts for keeping the distance from preconceived assumptions that the review might lead to. The first

reason is that the researcher knows well the context of the Erasmus programme, as he has been on mobility for one semester during his previous bachelor's studies in a different university than UPOL, as mentioned in the previous chapters. Therefore, he is familiar with procedures and terms that the Erasmus experience implies. Yet, he has not met the issues that the students of the UPOL's Faculty of Education might meet. Therefore, the researcher cannot be pointed to for having biases on matters related to the university. A second point is that the present study refers to a popular topic whose research might provide undermining conclusions. In fact, the meaning of why researchers do literature review is that they want to explore the already-existing studies, and eventually find explanatory details that might give a reading angle to matters met in the research. This is not the case for grounded theory (McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007). Here, the author should preventively avoid the contamination and the influence of the future theory. He should generate the theory as freely and as independently as possible from the influence of the studies of other researchers (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015; Glaser B. G., 1998).

Nevertheless, the grounded theorist is expected to provide an overview of the critical points of discussion in the matter. Besides, academic students doing grounded theory should motivate their drives to do research, as well as convince the readers that their studies find a contextual application and a contextual collocation (McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007). Therefore, the author of this thesis is proceeding with a general literature review. However, for the reasons mentioned above, the researcher has to consider aspects that are not meant to influence the following processes of the grounded theory (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015).

2.2. Feedback system

In the first instance, it is appropriate to address the matter of the feedback system issue. Abebe and Ford (2019) highlighted that the mobility students have the feeling that the existing feedback channels are impartial, not professional, inflexible, generally negatively administered, and lacking transparency over the reporting system. Besides, their respondents have the impression that their institutes' personnel is dismissive, in the way that they have been treated as unworthy of serious consideration. In conclusion, the authors found that research studies concerning "student engagement and feedback channels . . . are scarce." (Abebe & Ford, 2019, p. 19).

This fact is underlined by the study of Jacobone and Moro (2014), who claim the insufficient quantity and quality of "information and support from [the Erasmus students'] home institution" (Jacobone & Moro, 2014, p. 325). With this assertion, the two researchers give a valid input for this study, to inspect whether this accusation is valid also for UPOL, and, most importantly, how it should be efficiently addressed.

Therefore, the academic students are not satisfied with their universities' feedback systems. The present research paper has exactly this point as a goal: give voice to those unheard students, in order to give hope in potential improvements to the current feedback system quality.

2.3. Students' socio-economic status

As already explained in previous chapters, the research about the Erasmus programme is extended, talking about quantitative approaches. In this study, considering the various opinions can give an overview of the controversies

and limitations of such a programme, even though the various positions are inconsistent between them, and sometimes unreliable. Without having to explain, the researcher does not even take into consideration the unreliable research.

Indeed, the Erasmus programme is not immune to critics, despite its broad number of contributors and participants. Quite the opposite, browsing virtual journals it is easy to get lost in the flooding variety of critics that researchers point to, referring to the programme. Some research papers accuse it of not being aims-centred, rather pointing to a divergent direction. Some researchers address the matters of funding, in relation to the students' socio-economic status (Schnepf & Colagrossi, 2020), of the personal growth, (Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2017) as well as of the environmental (Spulber, 2020), gender and cultural aspects (Benedictis & Leoni, 2020; Benedictis & Leoni, 2021). These critics' reviews are superficial to this thesis, and they do not "contaminate" the final grounded theory (Glaser B. G., 1998; Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, in the complex, they are broad ranging, covering many matters from different angles. The most relevant assumption is regarding the learning potentials and professional growth of the Erasmus students. This is the focus of the next sub-chapter.

Here, the attention is on the socio-economic factors and motivators. Juvan and Lesjak (2011) use the term "sponsored vacations" as an alternative provocative way to consider the motivation for the international experience. The authors claim that the desire of going on mobility to a "party city" is seen as a motivator to go on Erasmus, especially from students with satisfactory academic results (Juvan & Lesjak, 2011, p. 28). Seen in this way, mobility is conceived as a financial means to get abroad. Actually, their discussion is later taken up by Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, & Axelsson (2015), who explain that these fun motivators play, however, an interesting role. They bring together mobility students that desire to share their lives with others. In this way, an

international exchange of culture creates a pleasant context, where students still learn unconciously. Furthermore, the mobility enhances their academic motivation once they are back home.

On the other hand, other researchers state that the funding for such mobility experiences do not cover the living cost, striking mostly on the students that are not backed by their jobs or their families. Some researchers name it "unequal uptake" (Schnepf & Colagrossi, 2020), assuming that those students with lower socio-economic backgrounds find it harder to join such international initiatives. As a result, this detail precludes that slice of students' population from participating in the programme and consequently growing professionally, increasing future social segregation (Schnepf & Colagrossi, 2020).

In the light of such an intricate situation, it is important to bear in mind the reasons why there is a grant. As shared on the European Commission's website[4], Sofia Corradi, known as "the Mother of Erasmus" (Corradi, 2015), reminds it in an interview[5]; she defines the role of the fund as means to cover the additional expenses that those students would have over what they normally spend in their universities' towns. Furthermore, the Erasmus is a project that is part of a broader picture, in which it is meant to strengthen the relationships between European countries and to grow a more sophisticated sense of Europeanism (Corradi, 2015). This view has been often seen as taken for grant without being verified. However, there are empirical studies that confirm the validity of those assertions. The students on Erasmus mobility get in contact with other student citizens of EU states members. This experience raises their interest in Europe, and it starts an unconcious process of self-identification and belongingness to a broader affiliation context,

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[4] "Studying abroad: Financial Support", Erasmus+, European Commission, March 30, 2023, accessed April 2, 2023 https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-individuals/students/studying-abroad
[5] "Sofia Corradi, "Mamma Erasmus"", European Commission Multimedia Centre, July 24, 2022, accessed April 2, 2023 https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/video/sofia-corradi-mamma-erasmus_N004-0043

where other countries are seen as allies rather than competitors (Mitchell, 2012; Jacobone & Moro, 2014). This is another aspect shown in the next sub-paragraph.

2.4. Erasmus implications

The assumptions of the Erasmus programme as a way to improve soft skills, to facilitate the employability, and to increase the European identity (Corradi, 2015) are well proven. Brandenburg, Berghoff, and Taboadela (2017) led a very interesting impact study commissioned by the EU, in which they report in detail mixed approaches studies carried out by their team. In the following paragraphs, with supporting studies from the mentioned EU-commissioned team as well as from other researchers, these three features are going to be described: abilities improvement, enhancing employability, and increasing European identity.

First, the mobility period helps develop soft skills. In the mentioned study, the team have researched a set of six abilities, namely "memo©", which are "Confidence, Curiosity, Decisiveness, Serenity, Tolerance of Ambiguity and Vigour" (Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2017, p. 137). In the first instance, they have been proven to be relevant skills to employability. Then, the team showed that these abilities increased thanks to the experience abroad. The results are consistent between the research team's qualitative and quantitative findings.

The quality of the students' abilities are indeed improved with the Erasmus experience, as well as gaining confidence in interacting with strangers, and acquire new perspectives in seeing the problems (Asoodar, Atai, & Baten, 2017). Regarding the skills acquired, the results are homogenous talking about "the metacognitive and cognitive dimensions . . . language skills,

practical knowledge related to different academic practices, and general social practices" (Dolce, Davoine, Wodociag, & Ghislieri, 2023, p. 10; Varela, 2017). However, interestingly, the mobility does not imply any improvements in behavioural and motivational dimensions (Varela & Gatlin-Watts, 2013). Except for this inconsistency, without any doubts the mobility enhances the mentioned individuals' skills improvements (Varela & Gatlin-Watts, 2013; Dolce, Davoine, Wodociag, & Ghislieri, 2023; Varela, 2017; Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2017; Nada & Legutko, 2022).

The second point they have demonstrated is that, in a long-term perspective, the population of students that has been on mobility has a lower unemployment rate (Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2017). Furthermore, the employers assign more frequently greater professional responsibilities to these students. Lastly, the companies scouting for new employees affirm that "international experience [is] a basic requirement of the job", and meeting this requirement implies a higher salary (Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2017, p. 140).

Regarding the employability, the team's conclusions are comparable to Iriondo's (2020). The skills improved with the Erasmus experience are positively evaluated by employers. After the first year from the graduation, the students that had been on Erasmus are more likely going to be employed and to have a better paid position than their classmates who had not participated (Iriondo, 2020).

Finally, yet importantly, the Erasmus mobility experience does affect the students' life about the place where they are going to work and live, about their national identity, and about the relationships with their partners (Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2017). The team demonstrated an obvious, yet explanatory and interesting implication of the mobility period, namely the idea of living abroad. Consequently, the students with the Erasmus experience go to work or to live abroad with more probability than their mates do. Furthermore, the mobility made individuals feel European

more than before the experience. Another curious detail is that Erasmus alumni have a marked higher rate of partners with a different nationality, compared to non-mobile students (Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2017).

The dimension of enhancing European identity is also widely confirmed. The experience does not enhance only this aspect, but also the students' intercultural feeling, and their "interest in Europe" (Dolce, Davoine, Wodociag, & Ghislieri, 2023; Mitchell, 2012, p. 510). Nonetheless, this aspect of internationalisation is not an attractive factor for students that apply for the Erasmus programme (Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, & Axelsson, 2015).

Concluding, the three mentioned aspects find undoubtedly consistency with many other researchers. These conclusions find convincing continuity with Jacobone and Moro's (2014, p. 325) results, which demonstrated that "the mobility programme does not only increase human capital in individuals but also their cosmopolitan orientation . . . individual employability . . . development of skills required by modern European labour markets, and . . . encourages international understanding, European consciousness and identity."

Therefore, the EU-commissioned team's conclusions find consistency with the overwhelming majority of researchers. These positive implications of the Erasmus mobility experiences should move the UPOL's staff to do their best, in order to guarantee that as many students as possible had the opportunity to improve their lives by joining the programme. Hopefully, with this research, the responsible personnel are going to learn how interesting and relevant experience is Erasmus mobility for students, to learn how to improve the staff's support, and, consequently, to enhance the experience to more outgoing Erasmus students.

2.5. Needs for the research

In conclusion, the present thesis aims to improve the UPOL's personnel feedback system and support, as Abebe and Ford (2019) made clear the need. This research has to examine how the vital information concerning mobility is communicated to the UPOL's Erasmus students, and how to improve the quality of the university's support.

The socio-economic factor related to the support by the UPOL is a correlation that is not possible to investigate with this study. Firstly, because the researcher's interest in economic, social, and jurisdiction spheres is very limited. Secondly, the research influence in this field is perceived as powerless of changes. Therefore, socio-economic status and related implications are left out of the goals of this research, in spite of their importance.

After reading this chapter, it is indisputable that the research in the fields of consequent personal improvements after Erasmus mobility has prospered far beyond its needs. Briefly, the studies refer to improvement of soft skills and general abilities, employability, and European identity (Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2017; Jacobone & Moro, 2014). The researcher does not see a reasonable justification for persisting in examining once more the positive aspects that the study abroad experience enhances. At the same time, these findings should raise awareness of the importance that UPOL's staff is required to support such experiences. In order to do so, they are supposed to improve the outgoing Erasmus students' experiences, and to encourage and facilitate their participation in the programme. The related question "how?" is the focus of this thesis, which wants to explore deeply the students' perspectives.

3. Methods

3.1. Setting

The interviews have taken place in the most suitable place agreed between the researcher and the interviewees. The researcher proposed to meet at his habitation, as it is a quiet place where privacy can be safeguarded, and as they could have something to drink, a snack, or a meal. Three of the five respondents accepted the invitation. One of them preferred an online meeting, as, at the time of the interview, she was living far from the interviewer's place (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 188). Lastly, one of them preferred to meet in a café. This setting concerned the researcher, as it might have negatively influenced the quality and reliability of the answers. Quite the contrary, the respondent felt at ease and openly available to describe her personal experience. Hence, the settings for the interviews were adequate to the needs of the research (Bell, Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science, 2010).

3.2. Sample

The participants are five students of the UPOL's Faculty of Education that have applied for the Erasmus mobility programme, that have been on Erasmus mobility for a period of at least one semester since the academic year 2020/2021, and that have already concluded it at the moment of the interview.

The reason for restricting the selection to students that applied from 2020 is that in that period Covid-19 started spreading, creating a pandemic crisis in the Czech Republic and in the rest of Europe. It is relevant that at the time

of the students' application to mobility the pandemic period was started, in order to have data related to contemporary society's developments and circumstances. Besides, professionals foresee that this worldwide-spread occurrence brought many changes in the teaching approaches and in the educational fields that are going to affect future pedagogical methodologies (Guppy, et al., 2022). Educators and students believe that the changes brought by the pandemic to the educational approaches are irreversible. Having said that, they think that it does not imply any radical changes; still, educational technology will not be the same as we knew it previously the lockdowns caused by Covid-19. For instance, hybrid forms of teaching have been rapidly developing (Guppy, et al., 2022).

Another crucial point for referring to a more recent period is that those who have been on mobility more recently can evoke memories of experiences more accurately, as they have happened more freshly. Experiences that are more recent can be recalled with richer details than older ones, according to the "forgetting curve" (Stenberg, Stenberg, & Mio, 2012, p. 253).

As someone might have noted, the writer always used feminine pronouns and possessive adjectives when referring to the interviewees. The gender of the participants was not a discriminative attribute at the phase of recruiting. However, the reason why the five respondents are female students is that the vast majority of the UPOL's Faculty of Education students are female. In fact, the gender imbalance in the field of education of UPOL is aligned with the rest of European countries' average[6]. In 2017, 85% of UPOL's Faculty of Education graduates were female students[7]. Therefore, the writer, referring to the majority group, does not undermine the privacy of the respondents.

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[6] Eurostat, "Graduates by Education Level, Programme Orientation, Sex and Field of Education", Eurostat, August 9, 2022, accessed on March 18, 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/ eurostat/databrowser/view/educ_uoe_grad02$DV_443/default/table?lang=en
[7] ISPV, "Eurostat: Čtyři z pěti budoucích učitelů jsou ženy", Revue pro sociální politiku a výzkum, August 8, 2017, accessed on March 18, 2023, https://socialnipolitika.eu/2017/08/eurostat-ctyri-z-peti-budoucich-ucitelu-jsou-zeny/

Besides, statistical studies found a gender inequality in undertaking the Erasmus programme. There is no doubt that the rate of students that take part in mobility is higher for the female gender (Benedictis & Leoni, 2020; Böttcher, et al., 2016; European Commission, 2013; Vögtle, 2019). This is an additional indicator that this research does not take into consideration just the female gender as a form of discrimination.

Therefore, the predominance of female students in UPOL's Faculty of Education and on Erasmus mobility programmes are the two determinant factors that give an explanation to the fact that just female students represent the students population of the Faculty for this study. The researcher contacted a few male students, but they were not available at the time of the interview.

The age of the sample was not a discriminant factor neither. At the time of the interviews, the five respondents were between 22 and 26 years old.

3.3. Instructional and intervention materials

The thesis follows the general structure of the manual "How to Write a Master's Thesis" (Bui, 2019). The writer of the book helps give an effective and organised orientation to the thesis.

Beside the manuals cited elsewhere, to prevent plagiarism, the researcher has carefully included vital information from other studies, giving credits according to the handbook „How to avoid plagiarism" (Foltýnek, et al., 2020).

In addition, the book "A Manual for Writers: of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations" (Turabian, 2013) answered the researcher's doubts about

the use of formal English language in the master's thesis and in the interviews' scripts.

Furthermore, in the writing phase, the researcher has very often made use of Google's English Dictionary, provided by Oxford Languages[8], to easily and quickly find definitions and synonyms. This tool helped immensely the researcher, as he is not native English speaker.

The interviewer wrote down all the interviews using Word documents on his PC. After coding, from the Microsoft Office programmes package, the researcher worked with Excel, too.

In the open coding phase, after an attempt of using the "analogic way" of coding and categorising the data, the researcher opted for informatics alternatives. The two features that play a key role are that analysing the data on the PC are timesaving and well organised. As the financial resources of the researcher are limited, he has explored only free-of-charge software.

The result of this exploration is the online platform Taguette. Taguette[9] is a free, open-source, online tool for qualitative research. It allows the researcher to upload documents, code them easily, and export the coded texts. Basically, the researcher can highlight parts of the text and tag each of them with codes. The final work can be exported in different formats, such as an Excels tab, where codes are numbered and enlisted with the relative contents. It is even possible to download the full text, in a Word document, with the codes associated to each part. There are many other formats and settings of how to download the material (Rampin & Rampin, 2021). However, the researcher has found those two download options – Excel tab and Word doc – the most suitable for the purpose of the data analysis. In this way, the programme automatically generated a unique identity number for each part

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[8] "Oxford Languages and Google", Oxford Languages, April 8, 2023, accessed on April 8, 2023, https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/
[9] "About Taguette", Taguette, March 17, 2023, accessed on March 18, 2023, https://www.taguette.org/about.html#

of the script tagged with a code. This particular feature comes in handy in the following chapters, when the researcher intends to cite a part of the script.

Similarly, the option of using a software for organising the categories in concept maps was seen as more practical. The researcher used a programme called "Cmap tools". The schematic views displayed in the Results chapter of the thesis are created using this software. Its flexibility and its affordability are the two most attractive features for the researcher (Cañas, et al., 2005; Cañas, et al., 2004; Novak & Cañas, 2006).

3.4. Measurement instruments

3.4.1. Data collection tool

The researcher relies exclusively on data that has been collected with semi-structured interviews. Gathering data with a semi-structured interview allows the researcher to be more flexible during the interview itself (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). With this specific typology of data collection tool, the interviewer has to prepare a set of questions. Anyway, the questions' order can be different in each interview, according to the needs of the individual interview. Furthermore, it is possible to add questions to clearly illustrate certain points. Additionally, at the end of each set list of questions the "participants are free to add anything else to the interview that they might feel is relevant to the discussion" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 39).

The interviewer used a digital hand voice recorder (brand Zoom, model H1), in order to have the registration available at any time. The interviewees were aware of the use of the recorder to grab the interviews and agreed with the conditions that the material will be utilised just for the purpose of the research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

3.4.2. Goals

The interview questions are divided into five different set lists. These five blocks are before the mobility period (before), during the mobility period (during), after the mobility period (after), Covid-19 pandemic context (pandemic), support of UPOL's Faculty of Education staff (UPOL support).

The researcher follows the order before → during → after the mobility period. He will be adding further questions about the two remaining blocks – pandemic and Faculty support – according to the interview flow at the most appropriate moment, as the interview is semi-structured. For the same reason, the researcher has the opportunity to ask for additional information and to give to the interviewees the freedom to add any missed details (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

The data collection implies the researcher to cover the following points:

1. Before: to provide an outlook of the motivators and the preparation of the students to the Erasmus programme, before the start mobility experience period.

2. During: to illustrate the relevant events, the experiences, the key passages, the important relationships, the problems and the obstacles faced during the mobility period.

3. After: to provide a final assessment of the mobility experience, comparing the expectations with the conclusions, and assessing the outputs of the experience.

4. Pandemic: to illustrate the challenges and implications related to the Covid-19 pandemic situation, before, during and after the mobility period.

5. UPOL support: considered the various challenges and the difficulties, to analyse the support that the Faculty's staff provided and the role that they played before, during, and after the experience.

3.4.3. Contents

As anticipated in the previous part, the interview's storyline follows the logic of before, during, and after the Erasmus mobility experience. With these three terms, the researcher wants to provide a set list that is designated to be perceived as the sequence of the mobility experience. It is significant that the respondents have started the period of mobility, experienced it, and ended it. Similarly, the three symbolic phases of journeys are the departure, the passage, and the arrival (Leed, 1991). Analogising the mobility experience to a journey, each mobility period matches with a journey phase. In the following paragraphs, the researcher is going to explain the philosophical matters that lay behind this order.

The preparation for the Erasmus mobility, namely departure, includes aspects that motivate the individuals and make them ready to experience the unknown future challenges: expectations, reasons, supportive and deterring roles, personal context, social context, bureaucracies and so on.

The departure phase grows and it culminates with the passage stage of the traveller. Its starting moment is when the travellers physically leave their homes, to start the journey. The first encounters and happenings in the new places are the most memorable ones. It is then that they realise and concretely experience those circumstances they had prepared themselves for. The events they come across, the people they meet, their costumes, their habits, and much more become the reality of the passage phase.

Consequently, the passage is resolved on arrival. This one is a protracted phase that does not begin nor conclude at a defined moment. Consequently, the settling identification process of the individual is an impalpable transition with no start-end boundaries (Leed, 1991). The features of the arrival phase gives the individuals the self-awareness of the changes that the journey enhanced since their departure.

The point of this perspective is that, in concrete terms, it might seem appropriate to claim that the mobility journey began when the candidate left his home, and ended when he or she was back. Nevertheless, the travel experience has roots way earlier than the leaving moment. As well as it does not finish with the end of the trip, but it is prolonged in an arrival phase that does not have a destination. The travellers' lives proceed and evolve from that arrival (Leed, 1991).

This philosophical overview of Leed (1991) elucidates the phases that the travellers go through in their journeys. Just to make it clear one more time, the travellers of this research are those interviewed students that have been on Erasmus mobility. The structure of the interview follows the Leed's phases, as a way to recall the participants' evolution of the experience. The terms adopted for this project are before, during, and after the mobility period. The interviews follow this structure and this sequence detail is communicated beforehand the starting.

Therefore, the first three points of the interview are before, during and after the Erasmus experience. Subsequently, the interview has two additional points. One aims to clarify the Covid-19 pandemic context in the different stages of the mobility. While the other one has the goal of making sure that the respondents' answers to the interview questions have covered the aspects related to the UPOL's Faculty of Education staff support, in the various phases of the experience. In this way, it is important to find the role played by the Faculty to build up those expectations, whether they did it or not. In fact, the preparation of the students to the mobility period beforehand might play the role of giving students a wide overlook of obstacles as well as exciting features about Erasmus mobility. According to that, the alumni will get ready for those expectations.

3.5. Procedures

First, the researcher recruited the participants using „convenience" and „purposive sampling" (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015, pp. 170-171). He asked his thesis supervisor and some Erasmus coordinators of the Faculty of Education if they could share with him the contacts of students with those specific features mentioned in the earlier sub-chapter. Then, to those students who answered the researcher's call for an interview, using „snowball sampling" (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015, p. 171), he recruited further classmates of theirs. Hence, the selection process was accurately carried out, in order to reach the quota needed for the sample formed by the participants with that exact experience.

Then, they have been informed about how the researcher obtained their contacts. Some students have been contacted by institutional email, while most of them have been contacted by the informal chat application "Messenger". Here below is the text sample used as a message for the interview recruitment, by chat. The text by email is similar – it features equivalent contents.

Hello . . . [name of the student], I'm Davide Pavesi, student of the Faculty of Education, UPOL. As your classmate . . . [name of the classmate] probably told you, I am doing research about Erasmus mobility for my final thesis for my mgr. course. She/he suggested to contact you, because you've recently been in . . . [place of mobility] with the Erasmus+, is it correct? If you agree, we can meet . . . [proposed time] for an interview about your mobility experience.

Obviously, the exchange of messages continued just with those students that agreed proceeding with the interviews. Some of the contacted alumni refused for personal reasons of time or place. To the respondents that requested it, the researcher sent the interview protocol, with the questions they were supposed to answer. The interviewer proceeded with honesty and

flexibility. The agreement of the setting and the timing has been chosen considering the interviewees availability in terms of time and place, as mentioned above. Furthermore, the interviewer has anticipated the approximate amount of time that the appointment would have taken (Bell, Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science, 2010).

The meetings took place in the mentioned setting, with the mentioned sample, one by one. The interviews have been recorded, with the interviewees' verbal consents. Nobody has refused, even after hand.

The interviewer is obliged to safeguard the students' anonymity. In this regard, in some parts of the scripts the researcher judged the information provided as sensible details. These features might have undermined their privacy (Hammersley, 2007; Newsome, 2016; Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The key details have been omitted with the three ellipsis dots "...", and specified what sort of information is missing in brackets "[]" (Turabian, 2013). For example, *My name is . . . [name]. (#3453671)* Such omissions have been adopted when the interviewees were referring to their name, UPOL's staff's names, age, hosting university, hosting city, and period of mobility. This being said, the censored information does not play any key roles in the developments nor in the results of the grounded theory.

Each interview took 40 minutes on average. The shortest lasted 20 minutes, and the longest 60 minutes. All the interviewees answered the interviewer's questions, providing all the details needed.

In a second moment, all the interviews have been written down as mentioned in the previous sub-chapter. The scripts have been coded (open coding) using the mentioned software coding platform. Then, the coded scripts have been downloaded in an Excel tab format. Subsequently, the researcher categorised the codes with axial coding in a three-level system and

organised them into concept maps. The coding processes are better illustrated in the Data Analysis sub-chapter.

3.5.1. Interview protocol

The order and the contents of the interview protocol follow the recommendations of the manual "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 190-191).

The section 0.1. provides basic details to catalogue the interview.

The points 0.2. and 0.3. work as an introduction. Therefore, they contain ethical questions, instructions, and a brief presentation of the interview.

The following 0.3., 0.4., 1.1., and 1.2. parts are meant as "ice-breaker type of questions" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 191). They are not influencing the results. Besides, they are personal details that have to be cut out from displaying, in order to safeguard the privacy of the respondents.

The rest of point 1, and points 2, 3, 4, and 5 include the research contents questions. Notice that the points for the questions of the parts 4 and 5 continue the numeration from the end of the parts 1, 2, and 3. The reason is that the questions of the parts 4 and 5 are relative to the parts before, during, and after (1, 2, and 3).

Concluding each part, the interviewees are asked to add information that the interviewer did not ask and they find important to share.

0.1.   Basic information: recording number; time; date; setting; interviewee name; assigned letter.

0.2.   Do you agree with the conditions that this interview will be recorded and it will be used for this research? It is anonymous; I will not use your real name nor any identifying details.

0.3.   The right answer is the true one for you. Tell me as much as you feel relevant about each of my questions. They will guide you. Feel free to answer. Take your time. We will talk about before, during and after your period of mobility Erasmus, the challenges you faced and the support by the institutions, and pandemic-related contents. Then, if you wish, you can add important details that you think I have missed. Feel free to ask me anything you want to clarify about the research or the interview.

0.4.   What's your name? How old are you?

0.5.   What are you studying? What Faculty? At which year of your studies are you now?

1. **Before**:
   1.1. When have you been on mobility? How long?
   1.2. Where have you been on Erasmus mobility?
   1.3. Why have you been on mobility? What factors made you pick that country out?
   1.4. Why have you participated in the Erasmus programme? What key factors made you decide?
   1.5. What were your expectations when you applied for mobility?

2. **During**:
   2.1. Who and/or what institutions were the first that welcomed you at your arrival? How have you got in touch with them? How have they welcomed you?
   2.2. What unpredicted problems and obstacles have you faced during the mobility period? (Regarding the studies as well as the daily life out of the Faculty) How have you overcome them?
   2.3. What new challenges regarding both the studies and the daily life has the mobility given rise to (lead to)?

3. *After*:

   3.1. Comparing the expectations to the reality, how do they differ? What is different from the expectations?

   3.2. What are the causes of these differences?

   3.3. How could they have been anticipated? If there are problems, how could they be avoided beforehand?

   3.4. What expectations has the experience fulfilled? In what way?

4.   *Pandemic*:

   1.5. When have you applied for the Erasmus mobility? Before the mobility period, what role has the Covid-19 pandemic situation played in your decision making process? How has it influenced your choice?

   2.4. How has the pandemic affected the Erasmus students' daily life in that country? During the mobility period, what threats has it represented? What opportunities has it enhanced?

   2.5. How did our Faculty back the pandemic-related needs? What has it done in order to overcome the pandemic-related difficulties?

   3.5. What should it have done? What are the miscalculations on our Faculty side pandemic-related?

5.   *UPOL support*:

   1.6. Before the mobility period, who and/or what institutions played a role in the decision making process? How? What have they done to make you believe so?

   1.7. Who and/or what institutions gave you support and helped you before the departure? How? Describe the cases.

1.8. What role has our Faculty played before mobility? What events, initiatives, professors have informed you and given an understanding about Erasmus?

2.6. During the mobility period, who and/or what institutions gave you support and helped you overcome those difficulties? How? Illustrate the cases.

2.7. What role has our Faculty played during the mobility? When has anybody from UPOL helped you? Describe the cases.

3.6. From who and/or what institutions had you been expecting support, but then they had failed providing it? What should they have done, in your opinion? What about our Faculty?

3.6. Data Analysis

As already mentioned, the researcher adopted the grounded theory qualitative approach. The data analysis involves initial and intermediate coding, adopting open and axial coding (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015). The researcher reckons that the study does not need the use of advanced coding. In fact, the results can be complete even adopting only initial and intermediate coding, and leaving out advanced coding (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015, p. 112; Charmaz, 2014).

A qualitative approach is indispensable to find out the deep insights and as detailed experience as possible. The purpose of choosing a qualitative approach is related to the sensitivity that characterises the researcher in the process of examining the qualities of experiences (Newsome, 2016). The information needed cannot be explained with numerical data, but it needs to be illustrated with words (Bell, Doing your research project: a guide for first-

time researchers in education, health and social science, 2010). Every participant has a unique story to tell the researcher. When understanding the qualitative data, it is a crucial task for the researcher to constantly keep the respondents' point of view and to interpret their perspectives (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015; Saldaña, 2013).

The grounded theory approach was ideated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The fundament of this qualitative methodology is that using the collected data, the researcher should elaborate and develop an explanation or theory around phenomena (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015). This process analyses the data following an inducting logic, and constantly compares data, codes and categories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Adopting the grounded theory as a research method can give the researcher the opportunity to organise the information gathered and to formulate a theory based on real experiences.

Open coding is a "First Cycle coding process" that gives the researcher the opportunity to itemise sentences, words, paragraphs of an interview's transcripts and tag each one with representative terms (Saldaña, 2013, pp. 100-105). This phase can employ different coding methods. Saldaña (2013) recommends to pay attention to "processes – participant actions that have antecedents, causes, consequences, and a sense of temporality . . . [and] properties and dimensions of categories – conceptual ideas that bring together similarly coded and related passages of data" (p. 103). The codes have been assigned reflecting the participant's point of view (Saldaña, 2013), and then categorised considering the target of the research (Birks & Mills, 2015).

As anticipated, the first few questions of the interview are used as "ice-breakers" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 191). These are classified as "attribute" codes (Saldaña, 2013, p. 70), and the sensitive details are omitted (Turabian, 2013). Therefore, they do not represent relevant information for the data analysis.

After the open (or initial) coding, the next step in analysing data is to proceed with axial coding (Saldaña, 2013), as a coding method for intermediate coding (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015). This method implies reorganising those codes fragmented in the previous phase (Saldaña, 2013, p. 218). The researcher can leave out the less significant codes, while he has to pick out and group the most relevant ones. The point is that he has to classify them in categories and subcategories. Each category has specific meanings and properties that distinguish it from the others. The researcher has to identify and describe them to show what makes them different between each other (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015). The aim is to identify the phenomena and the core categories associated. Then, the researcher has to display it in a concise concept map (Saldaña, 2013) and to illustrate the findings.

During open and axial coding phases, the researcher is expected to keep writing down memos (Saldaña, 2013). The memos are indispensable notes that are going to be needed in the processual phase of the research, when the author has to put down the theory in words.

4. Results

Now the researcher is going to illustrate the most significant finding, answering the research questions asked in the introduction and the relative sub questions.

In order to enhance the understanding of the concepts for the readers, many examples are provided. Parts of the interviews are reported, followed by a related number. That number is a unique number that relates to the tagged part of the script of the interviews.

Attached to this thesis, there is the Appendix, which shows the categories and subcategories analysed in this chapter. In the Appendix, each category is represented by just a few codes, despite the same category might include many more. The researcher selected the most representative code(s) for each subcategory.

4.1. Experience

The research question and sub-questions are:

How do the mobility students present their overall Erasmus experience?

- What factors motivate the mobility students to undertake the Erasmus experience?
- What aspects represent the most challenging issues in their personal lives, during the Erasmus mobility experience, according to the mobility students?
- How have the mobility students been supported during the whole Erasmus experience?

- What are the relevant aspects of the background context that have played a significant role in the whole Erasmus mobility experience for the mobility students?
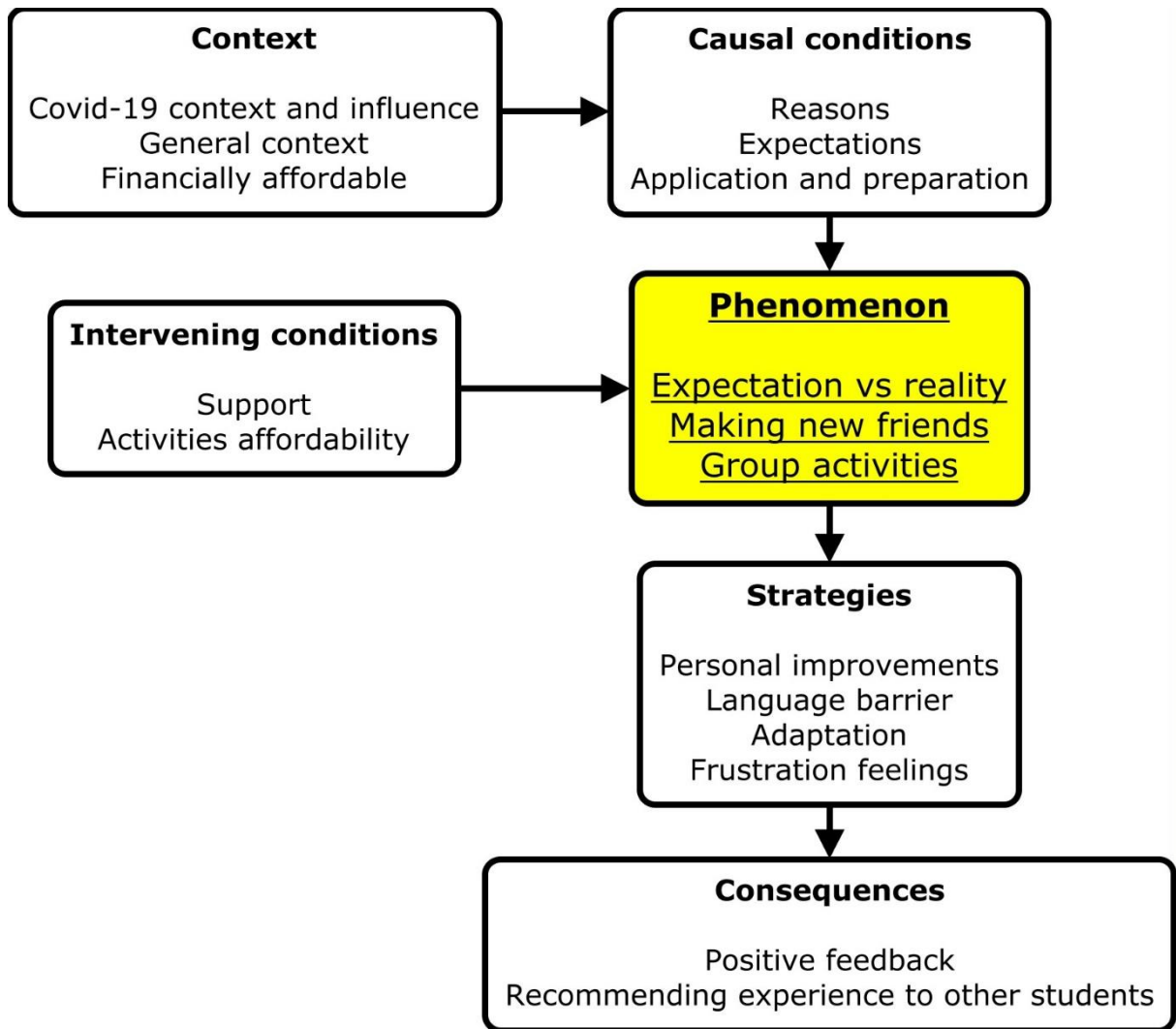
Table 2: Concept map for the first research question.

4.1.1. Phenomenon

The phenomenon is represented by the reality of the experience, which includes the sub-categories: Expectations vs. Reality; Making New Friends; and Group Activities.

The students reported some aspects of the mobility experience that were not as they had expected before the departure. In the subcategory of expectations, there are stereotypes about the Erasmus mobility and expectations that other students made them believe. They have pointed out that the workload was harder than the friends used to say.

So, when somebody will tell you "go to Spain on Erasmus, it's easy!" it's NOT! (#3501368)

In particular, about the expectations for the studies, they realised that in their classes the students were all locals; they expected the university to arrange Erasmus classes, meaning just Erasmus students in the same class.

I thought that I would be in an international class, because it's Erasmus, they always put the people [on Erasmus] together, (#3496087) but I was studying with Turkish people. (#3496092)

Other disappointed expectations concern the free time activities, namely travelling and events.

I think I travelled a lot, but because the school was like not hard, but I needed to attend every day, I was not able to travel as much as I wanted, but still... (#3498779)

But I thought that the organisation which invited us for Erasmus will make more events, or more parties, or more events. (#3479054)

These expectations are individual; they are not generalizable. Nonetheless, it is curious to observe how the students start their Erasmus programme with detailed expectations. The different and unexpected situation leaves them confused.

Nevertheless, the Erasmus experience is rich with opportunities to meet other people. Every interviewee has covered this aspect. Making friends and enjoying group activities are the two subcategories containing the most appreciated experiences by the students. Different opinions came out,

however they all got to the point that being involved in activities with others represented the key for having fun.

Someone explained the tendency of meeting someone at group events and then building new relationships that are not going to last long, but keeping this propensity of renewing relationships often. While others showed an interest to build long lasting relationships

Sometimes happened that we were in a party . . . with some girl or like boy girl, talking and good friends, you know. (#3498204) And, then, you just lost them because there's so many schools, and so many people, and everything, so we never saw each other - for example – anymore, you know. (#3498210) That was fun: so many people. (#3498214)

It was really good, . . . because from the beginning we went together to parties. Also, girls were alone, they didn't know each other. So, we kind of stick together from the beginning . . . (#3484836) So, in the beginning we were going with them everywhere, to parties were going from beginning till the end. (#3484842)

The ESN (Erasmus Student Network) played a crucial role in putting the Erasmus students in contact. The students reported its importance. This association enhanced the group activities. However, on many occasions, outgoing students independently organised events or joined group activities on their own. This happened especially for those cases that the ESN did not cover.

The Erasmus Student Network had very good - had really good - activities planned for students. So, if you have participate in it, it was amazing with these people. So, it was super nice to participate. (#3503448)

I found another organisation, which organised a choir, so we were singing in the big group. (#3479305)

In addition, it is important to underline the challenge and opportunity that the Erasmus mobility gives to students to experience independence and loneliness.

But, it means that you are many hours there alone... if you don't have any school or any programme it means that you have just yourself, like a partner. (#3479297)

4.1.2. Causal conditions

Firstly, it is appropriate to start explaining the causal conditions. The causal conditions of the Erasmus experience are referring to Reasons, Expectations, and Application and preparation. In the interviewees' timeline of the Erasmus experience, these subcategories find the collocation in the part before they had left.

Basically, the reasons are divided into reasons why to go on mobility, and reasons why to choose a specific country. The reasons why to go on mobility reported a more regular pattern between respondents. For example, all of them expressed the drive to improve their English language skills.

Of course, have a better English. (#3485968)

Another constant interest was having new experiences: meeting new people, travelling, living a different culture.

I just wanted to go somewhere. (#3501590)

I wanted to have new experiences. (#3479041)

And, you know, meet new people, new culture. (#3485971)

A less mentioned reason is to change the environment. In a case, the interviewee referred to the family and class environments. Here, the Covid-19 pandemic situation forced the students to stay at home with their relatives.

In another case, the relationships were with the classmates, accusing the presence of only girls in the class.

And, after Covid, it was a nice change not to be at home and travel and having new experiences. (#3485975)

I will be honest, as much as I can. So, we are a class full of girls, and it's really crazy to stay all the time with just girls. (#3500310) So, I wanted to change the place, and change the people. I needed to clear my mind a little. So, that's why I chose to go on Erasmus. (#3500344)

A respondent found it challenging to undertake solo travel and to learn how it is to live independently.

I always wanted to have that experience, to travel somewhere by yourself. (#3457785)

The reasons for choosing the exact place were much more individual; rarely two respondents gave the same interpretation. Generally, it is adequate to say that the reasons for picking out an exact country are the individual's interests. The variety of reasons was wide: someone liked the local language, someone else because they had the possibility to go on Erasmus with the partner, someone loved the weather, for someone else it was her "dream country".

Talking about expectations, the respondents referred to expectations for the Erasmus experience that can be catalogued into two main groups: free time, and learning. Learning includes various aspects of the experience: not just strictly about studies and the English language, but also about learning and adapting to the new culture. Expectations about the free time involved mainly exciting and fun activities, such as group events, travelling, and making new friends. These free time expectations are very closely interrelated to the reasons for having decided to go on mobility. Interestingly, the reasons to go on mobility and the interrelated free time expectations are two categories with features that more students share in common. It is a

correct statement to say that the free time expectation has a shared correlation with the reasons for undertaking the Erasmus mobility as an experience in general.

Referring to causal conditions, it is crucially important the preparation phase before the departure. The three recurrent topics about preparation are the learning agreement dealing, the communication from the universities, and the search for accommodation.

Dealing with the learning agreement paperwork has represented a struggle for every student, in different moments of the experience. This is a focus for the next research question. Now, it is more interesting to say something about the communication from the universities. When asked if anyone of the UPOL's staff encouraged the students to try the Erasmus mobility, many students affirmed that they have not received any invitations for any informative events about the Erasmus nor any inspiring professor.

I don't remember that any professor talked about it, or anything. I was also surprised that nobody from school was like, "yes, do it, go, it's good!" Like, no one. (#3480282)

Nevertheless, some respondents found motivation thanks to the coordinator's enthusiasm and dedication. However, this circumstance can take place just once the student has the interest for the mobility experience. This means that the drive for the travelling had already been triggered. In spite of that, the enthusiasm of the coordinator was remarkable.

She [the Erasmus coordinator] was really nice to people and can explain things really easily and well. So, she was always really into travelling. (#3479096) So, when I was there, at the interview, which places are possible (#3479100) I saw that she was everywhere, it was very nice. (#3479102) Yeah, maybe she was the main person (#3479104).

The search for accommodation was an obvious and indispensable step for everyone. Some students commented on the difficulties faced because of the language barrier of the dormitory website or of the owner.

4.1.3. Context

Therefore, those above were the causal condition for the phenomenon of the Erasmus experience. However, these causal conditions are influenced by the context. This includes the Covid-19 Context and Influence, Financially Affordable, and General Context.

All the students stated that the pandemic situation affected only the period of mobility, but not the decision to leave nor the place where to go. Furthermore, the restrictions would not have allowed fun activities, such as travelling. Hence, the outgoing students' best option was to wait until the pandemic situation would be under control.

I wanted to study in my second year of studies on Erasmus, but I delayed that because it was pandemic and it wasn't possible (#3479084)

It didn't change my mind. I wanted to go also before to Spain, so nothing had changed. (#3500557)

During the most severe Covid-19 restrictions, the institutions managed to teach online. This way of teaching was seen negatively by the mobility students. They would not have accepted an online Erasmus experience. It is interesting to observe that online Erasmus had not gained as much success as probably expected.

I supposed to go on Erasmus a year before than I went, but the Covid came. (#3500445) because, you know, I will have no opportunity to travel that much, and so on. (#3500507) And, the school was online. (#3500527)

I wanted to study in Germany but they offered just online Erasmus, so this is one big difference. (#3479078)

Other contextual instances are more individual. Some students wanted to precise that the surrounding individuals have not really played a significant role in decisions regarding the Erasmus mobility. They wanted to point out that to do the Erasmus mobility the key factor was just their drive to do it.

First of all, it was just my choice. (#3500582)

It wasn't because of professors, or some people. (#3480222)

Some students explained that in their current studies the offers were more inviting than their previous study courses were. The students stated that the attractive availability of Erasmus destinations definitely played a role in the decision making process.

And, [during my previous study course] we didn't have so many opportunities; I could go only to Slovakia or Poland. (#3479787)

However, what everybody highlighted is that without the financial support of their relatives, they would not have made it.

My family helped me a lot, also with financials... because for me it was kind of expensive. (#3480290)

And, my brother was totally: "if you will be missing some money, I will give you whatever you need." (#3458173)

The family played a crucial role as a moral support, too.

My parents quite pushed me to do this. (#3457937) because they wanted me to have the experience to see the world by myself without anyone else. So, they want this for me. (#3457946)

Anyhow, some relatives and friends were reluctant and the outgoing students accused them of being deceiving or deterring. In this example, it is blatant how prejudices and stereotypes worked.

[My mum] was a little bit afraid, you know. (#3499741) Because they still think it's a Muslim country, of course, but you can't wear whatever you want there, you can't do whatever you want there. (#3499749) So, they were scared that they will kill me, or I don't know what, because I have a skirt, or something. Like, my grandma she was scared too. (#3499761) My dad is racist, so he was really not for it, you know. He hated it so much. (#3499764)

This contextual overview played a key role in the decision making process and in the preparation for Erasmus mobility. The causal factors are rooted in the surrounding environment in an inextricable way.

4.1.4. Intervening conditions

The intervening conditions directly influence the phenomenon of the experience. They include the support of the surrounding people forming the Support, and the Activities Affordability.

The people providing support are many and they are both people they knew already before, and others that they met during the mobility period. People they knew before means relatives and UPOL staff. While people they met during means flatmates, the assigned "buddy", the ESN volunteers, classmates, personnel of the hosting university, fiends, and even generally the locals.

The [UPOL's Erasmus office] secretary, she was nice to me. She was like, "okay, I know Spanish people…" so, we tried to manage it. (#3484805)

I always could count on my family, of course, but, you know, it was from distance. (#3474091)

So, me and other Erasmus students were just texting each other and guessing what to do. (#3474638)

I could talk basic about everything with many people there, like, with the Erasmus students. and even the teachers were very welcoming and they told us in every problem we could, like, ask them for help or anything we need. (#3474112)

Nonetheless, a factor that is remarkably influencing is the affordability of any expenses: accommodation, internet connection, events, group activities, food.

We went to trips with them, it was easy to sign up, and to pay, it was even cheap. So, it was okay. (#3484885)

4.1.5. Strategies

As strategies, the keys are the Personal Improvements, the Frustration Feelings, the Adaptation, and the Language Barrier.

As improvements, the experience enhanced various aspects, such as language, culture, inspiration for future actions, and independence.

I stood outside of my comfort zone. (#3485047)

I learn something about the culture. I have some international friends, which I wanted to have and try. (#3498791)

The adaptation is featured by the aspects of the hosting culture that the students eventually adapted to.

One challenge for me was to talk more with people (#3473539) to more interested when they are planning, because you had to ask for being invited, basically. (#3473553) it was hard for me to ask to be invited, so this was my big challenge. (#3473556)

Another demanding challenge was the language. Not just with locals in the daily life occurrences, but also in the academic environment, where others were supposed to speak English.

Even though they study English and they are supposed to know English the best, you know, and they will teach the kids and everything. They are able to speak, but they did not want to speak with me I don't know why. (#3498290)

These and other difficulties brought negative feelings, such as frustration, anger and fear. The mobility students had to deal with these emotive obstacles,

But, people didn't understand me, it was frustrated. Like, when I came from airport to the bus, I was speaking to the bus driver in English, like, "I want to get somewhere." and he was like "Qué?" I was like "Oh my God..." (#3483977)

It took me two and half months. Yeah, it was crazy. Like, I was really pissed out (#3484818)

4.1.6. Consequences

At the end of the experience, after the adoption of strategies, the consequences made their way. As outcomes of the general Erasmus experience, there are the subcategories Positive Feedback and Recommending the Experience to Other Students. In the next sub-chapter, difficulties and negative feedback are going to be explained and analysed.

Positive feedback can be seen as in an academic point of view, with the appreciation of the universities' staff, and in the general experience point of view of satisfaction. All the respondents have concluded the interviews reporting that the Erasmus mobility was a unique experience that improved their lives.

I'm just really glad that I had it opportunity to go there, it was life changing (#3474717)

I expect it will be amazing and it was. I didn't expect, like, any one total way it will be perfect, I was just like "okay it will be amazing". and it really was. (#3474542)

Recommendations for future students include not only direct advice for the students, but also suggestions for the general Erasmus administration. For example, to create the context that would motivate the students that have been on mobility to share their experiences with potential outgoing alumni.

So, I could recommend it to everyone who it's like on doubts, yeah, he should go for sure, like, just amazing. (#3474550)

I would say to [future Erasmus students] my experiences. And, then, they can make their own imagine on the Erasmus. (#3501385)

4.1.7. Overview

Therefore, the phenomenon of the Erasmus reality has been illustrated with the contrast between expectations and reality, and group activities. The whole process includes a before and an after parts. The before one is represented in the Causal Conditions and its Context, while the after one is about the Consequences of the experience. In between, there is the during happenings, namely the Phenomenon, the related Intervening Conditions and the Strategies to cope. Concluding, the interviewees are glad of the experience they had and they warmly recommend it to anyone who is uncertain.

4.2. Support

The second research question and its sub-questions are:

How does the mobility student describe the support offered by the UPOL's Faculty of Education staff relating to the issues faced during the Erasmus experience?

- How have the mobility students been supported by the UPOL's personnel during the whole Erasmus experience?
- What issues do the mobility students reckon that the UPOL's staff are supposed to assist?
- What strategies do the students recommend the personnel to adopt, in order to comply with their needs?
- How would the students address the problems that they have met?
- What expected results do the students suppose that their ideal solutions would lead to?
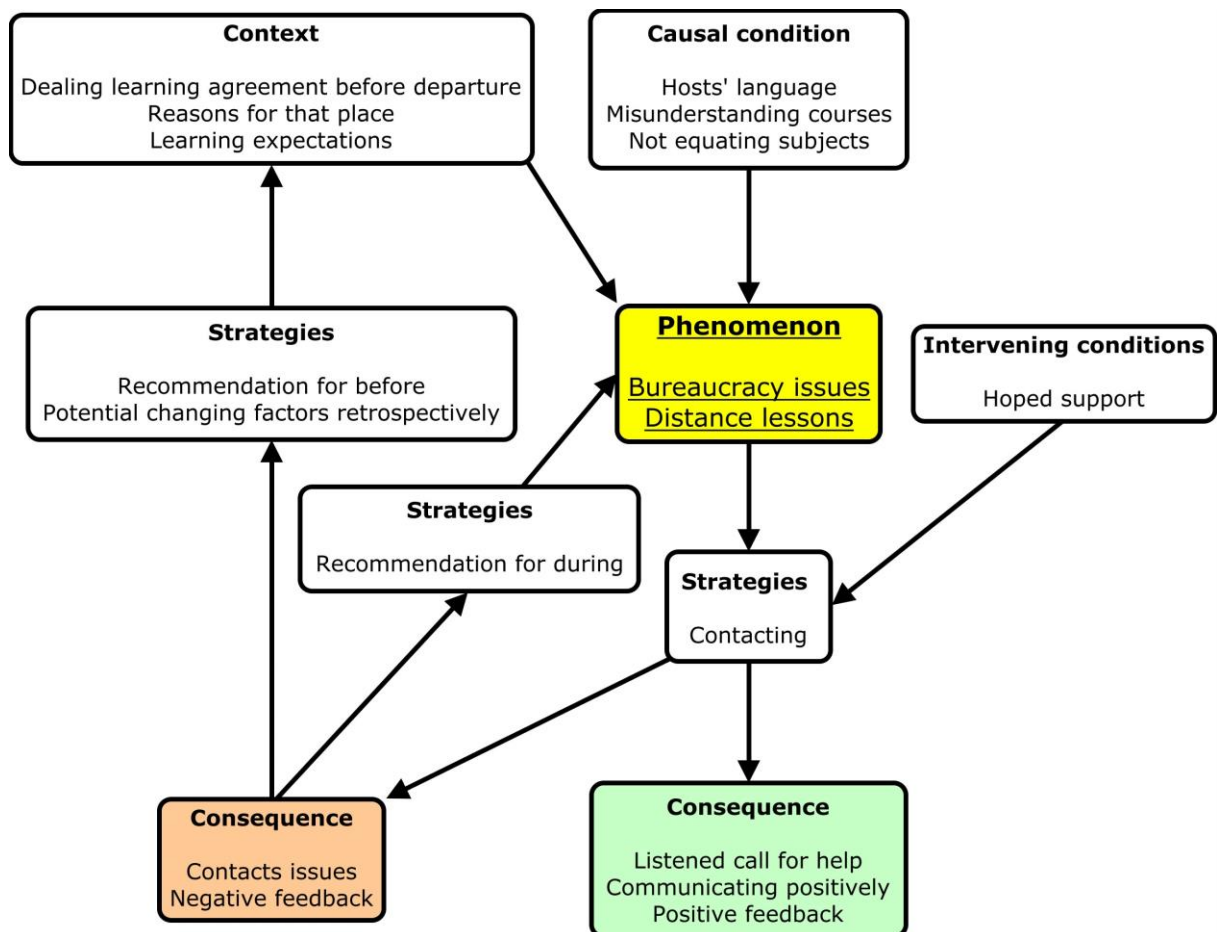
Table 3: Concept map for the second research question.

4.2.1. Phenomena

From the axial coding of the interviews two phenomena emerged: Bureaucracy Issues, and Distance Lessons. All the interviewees have mentioned these two issues. However, each respondent reported divergent implications and feelings about them.

Firstly, it is appropriate to illustrate them and define the background. The sub-category Bureaucracy Issues includes problems related to different papers. The one that implied most complications is definitely the learning agreement; every student has referred to it as annoying and confusing.

It was quite hard to know the learning agreement. (#3479333) When you download the paper where you fill in the courses and the stuff, that it wasn't structured like, this is the one Word document and you know there is everything valid for what you have to do. (#3479337)

This document enlists the host university's subjects that the student is planning to fulfil. In this document, it is important to illustrate which subjects of the hosting university (from now "host's subjects") the student intends to equate to the subjects of his/her UPOL's course (from now "home subjects"). When the student will be back, if he/she successfully completed those subjects, he/she does not have to do the equated home subjects, as they will result already fulfilled. Before the starting of their mobility period, the procedure consists in that the student has to fill it in, and the coordinator and the Erasmus officer have to approve it. This document can be edited a limited amount of times during the mobility period, and in case of changes it needs the approval of the coordinator. Therefore, if the student wants to edit it, he/she has to contact the relative coordinator. In the concept map, this contact part is defined as "strategy", because it is the way the students can solve the bureaucracy issue. Nevertheless, why should the students need their coordinators' support? What are the causal conditions and the context?

The second phenomenon emerged is Distance Lessons, referring to the lessons of the home subjects that the students had, while on Erasmus mobility. In spite of the mentioned agreement for equating the semester's subjects, a consistent part of them has been left unmatched.

But, I didn't have those similar subjects in Spain and also in Czech Republic. (#3501509) Because subjects, what I had in Spain, I already had them, I passed them, in Czech Republic, like, year before. So, there was the difference. (#3501525)

The consequence is that the students must somehow deal with the unmatched home subjects otherwise; the alternatives are either do them

distance, while they are still on mobility, or postpone them to the next semester or next academic year, hoping that it will not imply conflicts in the schedule and will not prolong their studies' end. In case they opt for doing them while they are on mobility, they have to contact the home subjects' professors. How have the students got to this point? What are the causal conditions and the context?

Yeah, so, I did like two universities at the same time. That was the deal. It was hard. (#3501555)

I had to do things for my Spanish school and, also, I had 12 subjects here in Czechia, in the same semester. (#3483864)

So, another problem were with my subjects in Czechia, here. (#3483803) Because, when I was going to Erasmus, I wanted to do my master degree, like, last year. (#3483860) But, because it was a lot things at one time. (#3483863)

4.2.2. Context

Therefore, the context influencing the phenomena include the categories Reasons for That Place, Learning Expectations, and Dealing Learning Agreement Before the Departure. It is important to say that the reasons and expectations play a role in determining certain circumstances. In fact, the students, moved by personal reasons, have decided to apply for the Erasmus programme and have chosen a certain place. These motivators play the key role of moving the students and bringing them to the situations described as phenomena. The students' expectations and reasons for the mobility are well illustrated in the previous sub-chapter, for the first research question.

I applied for Spain, so I was thinking maybe it's gonna be really easy. (#3500380)

Dealing Learning Agreement Before Departure is a category that contains many aspects related to the learning agreement approval for the Erasmus mobility, before the experience. The students reported it as stressful and confusing paperwork.

Maybe, there was the only a thing, that I was a bit confused and I don't really like was that... about that learning agreement. (#3458330) it was probably my biggest stress about that (#3458608).

4.2.3. Causal conditions

Those categories above are part of the influencing context. Anyhow, taking a step backwards, the direct Causal Conditions of the Phenomena are multiple. The categories involved are Hosts' Language, Misunderstanding Courses, and Not Equating Subjects. The issue at its root is that to successfully complete the Erasmus mobility and get the Erasmus financial grant the students had to fulfil enough subjects to collect at least 20 credits.

Because I could choose some subjects, and I needed, you know, 20 credits. (#3501483)

Many students complained about the language and other misunderstandings that led to the impossibility of successfully completing the agreed subjects. Firstly, the language issue concerns the fact that the host's subjects were taught in the local (foreign) language, despite the subjects' description reported that the teaching language was English and the coordinator reassured the students that English knowledge would have been enough. Here below there are some examples of the inconvenient situations the students reported.

My school told me that there is totally OK to only speak English, (#3483964) because I told them that I don't speak Spanish, (#3483967) and .

. . [the UPOL coordinator]: "it's OK to speak only English, it's totally OK, you will manage to do everything, and anything." (#3483969) but it wasn't like that. (#3483970)

Then I came there, I joined the lessons, and I found out that they are in Turkish – that was a big surprise. (#3496016)

And, I was only able to take some of them, because only some of the classes were all in English. (#3496141)

And, again, we are at the problem that I was supposed to only speak English and then I'm in school where everybody speaks Spanish. (#3484957)

4.2.4. Intervening conditions

To solve the issues, the strategies adopted involved mostly contacting the staff related to the problem. The strategies from the previous part were motivated by Intervening Conditions, which means Hoped Support. Before facing the problems, the students believed they could count on the help of some staff from both universities. It does not automatically imply that they have received the support or not. This block represents simply the expected support, which was from the home and hosting coordinators and other personnel, such as Erasmus officers and professors.

My coordinator from Czech Republic, at the interview, she told me like, "I will help you, everything is OK." (#3480615)

4.2.5. Strategies

Therefore, at the occurrence, the students contacted the responsible academic personnel. Some students hoped to be able to fulfil the

requirements of the host's subjects in the local language, by completing some additional tasks in English. In this example, the mobility student contacted the host subject's professor.

I was asking them if maybe I do not have to attend the class but I will take the test and, for example, write something extra or... [but the professor's answer was,] "No, no. No way." (#3496253)

The outgoing students had seen the professor's refusal as a misunderstanding between them. This is because the students reported that she knew other outgoing students on Erasmus with similar difficulties with other host's subjects; these mates had agreed an individual plan in English to fulfil the foreign language subjects. Going back to our case, in this way, the student had taken for granted that also in her case the teacher would have come to the same terms. The lack of compromising terms have worsened the frustration caused by the original language misunderstanding, the unexpected foreign language of the host's subject. This association triggered an automatic mechanism of feeling aggravated by the original misunderstanding. The student perceived the refusal of the professor as an unnecessary rigidity, because the student thought that the information was right and the solution adoptable.

They [other Erasmus students] get the option to not attend the classes, they just get a book in English and their task was to learn it all, and then go to the exam which is gonna be a special one for them in English. (#3496241) . . . For me no, so, maybe they thought it will be the same [as the other Erasmus student], but the teacher said "no way." (#3496253)

Other less reported misunderstandings are about conflicting host's subjects. In this case, apparently, the student had chosen two different subjects, but then realising they were the same one.

There was one subject; it was in English, like, the name, everything. And, it has some numbers. And, then, I choose – I thought it was – a different subject,

also in English, also the numbers, and everything different, but then I found out that it is the same subject. (#3483710)

The fact of leaving more subjects unmatched in the learning agreement brought to the emergency situation that the students had to deal with more home subjects in that semester, in order not to drag them to next semesters.

So, I had to write all my professors from this Faculty that my subjects from Spain won't apply to this subject, so they will not approve that instead of the subject. (#3483871)

In some cases, the Czech professors understood the situation and they compromised an individual study plan with the outgoing students. Generally, the alumni appreciated the terms.

So, maybe half of them were like very nice about it, they were happy that someone is going to Erasmus. (#3483894)

They said, "Just write about how this subject looks in Turkey." Which was nice, because in Turkey they do not have that subject. So, I just wrote why they do not have that, but what they have instead of that. And put some photos inside... and they loved it. Yeah, it was nice, so nice. (#3498771)

However, compromising individual terms to fulfil home subjects at distance was not always smooth. In some cases, the Czech professors ignored or refused the request. The UPOL professor's rejection was another, additional, frustrating unfairness to the mobility student.

You have to respond to me, it's your work. But they just ignored me. And, another one said, "No, you have to attend the classes." (#3498702)

This whole chain of issues used to happen in a relatively short period, at the very beginning of the semester. The Erasmus student had to urgently fix the inconvenient matters. The key strategy was the communication with the various responsible professors. In particular, with the Erasmus coordinator, the host subjects professors, and the home subjects professors.

4.2.6. Consequences

The conclusions could be either positive or negative. Positive, when the communication was satisfying, with compromising terms that implied a win-win situation, expectations fulfilled, and consequently positive feedback of the Erasmus students. Positive communication outcomes are met not only with personnel, but also with classmates and friends.

So, [my flatmate] helped me to solve that, just temporary, but so it was fine. (#3479172)

In this case, this respondent explained how much she was grateful of the hosting professors' availability to deal with problems, without experiencing personnel disburden nor irresponsibility.

Even if there was something unclear, I could ask the first person [at the Faculty]. (#3503444)

On the other hand, the negative conclusions include similar aspects, but experienced in a problematic way. Namely, communication issues, negative feedback, inflexibility. Here the critics are directed more frequently to university staff. Continuing with the previous example:

It wasn't like here [with the UPOL staff] that he will send me someone else. (#3473009)

In fact, the students thought the professors would have been more helpful.

I expect them to be the one who knows everything. (#3498845)

Many interviewees referred to the personnel's way to deal with them as if they were playing "ping-pong" and the students were the ball that bounces from one office to the other, from an employee to the other. In this way, the academic employee disburden himself of the duty of providing information to the student, claiming it is not in his competences to answer that specific student's question.

They were doing ping-pong with me. My coordinator was like "yeah, write to that person " (#3484810)

Consequently, the struggling students felt frustration and unfairness. A student even claimed the teachers of being coordinator just for the prestigious status and for more interesting intakes.

And, I don't know, I think that some coordinators just have status of coordinator, but they're not doing it right, or [they aren't doing it] at all. (#3484979) I don't know, maybe, she's just getting more money [at the end of the] month, because she's a coordinator. (#3484996)

The student of this last example also complained about the Erasmus questionnaire of the UPOL's Faculty of Education, which was perceived as ineffective.

I was doing some questions [in the questionnaire], anonymously, also about the school, how has helped you, and everything. I was negative like shit. (#3484981) but I don't think they will do anything. (#3484982)

4.2.7. Strategies – students' recommendations

In the last part of the interview, the respondents were asked to provide suggestions that might have facilitated the support expected. Therefore, the interviewees had the chance to comment on how to anticipate those dissatisfactions above. Classified as Strategies in the concept map, the interviewees' advice has been divided between recommendation for the period before the Erasmus mobility and recommendation for the period during the Erasmus experience.

The sub-category Recommendations for Before is further divided into Cooperation with Staff, and Structural (recommendations). The most important aspects the UPOL's personnel should improve, according to the

interviewees, are the cooperation and informing the students. Cooperating better means being more enthusiastic, caring more about the assigned students, keeping them updated and informing them of the most relevant structural differences between their Faculty and the hosting University.

I think that [for] this job there is supposed to be a person who is caring about those students. (#3484985)

They don't even know the deadlines of Erasmus applications - some of them. (#3498875)

This way to see the coordinators creates the deterring stereotype of uncooperative professors. This feature would dissuade the potential Erasmus students from applying for the programme.

A lot of people [potential Erasmus students] are scared to go on the Erasmus. Because of that, that they – the teachers or professors in Czech Republic – they will not support them. (#3501441)

Other structural improvements regard the cooperation between institutions or between members of the UPOL.

When you download the paper where you fill in the courses and the stuff, that it wasn't structured like: this is the one Word document and you know there is everything valid for what you have to do. (#3479337)

Maybe, I think that school should talk more about Erasmus. So, people will go, or anything. (#3485061)

Some of those shortcomings would have played a key role in the decision making phase, before applying to the programme. Such factors are informing about the online courses, about the essentiality of the local language, and other generic however significant information. They would have affected the place where to go, the period, or the preparation for the local language.

So, first of all, they did not tell me that it's gonna be half online and half offline. (#3495939) So, I think, if they told me before, I would probably don't go. It's hard to say now, you know... (#3495951)

And, my Faculty should know that it's better if someone speaks more Spanish, I don't know... (#3483989) if I knew it, I think that my preparation for Erasmus would be more about learning this language. Yeah, I think I will try to learn it more. (#3483995)

Other strategies involve recommendations for during the period, therefore when the experience is already started. In this phase, communication plays a crucial role in the development of relationships of the staff with the students. Another thing is that the coordinators should be more informed and facilitate the bureaucracies, instead of dismissing the issue by sending their students to solve their problems somewhere else. In fact, many respondents complained about the approach that the UPOL's staff have. Also planning and structuring the experience, the deadlines, and the terms would help the students.

But, yeah, probably our Faculty should know more. (#3474684)

So, for me it would be better when there will be someone who just talk about things, even if I know that I have some deadline. Just talk about it what is the next step, "maybe no one told you that this will be next or blah blah..." things about this experience. (#3479322)

Again this, and then I text it to one person in that foreign, that departure for the students for the Erasmus. And another one mailed me, like two weeks later, if I could send it her, too, as well. (#3474690) I was like, "it's everywhere! It is in the STAG, I send it to her colleague, I send it to 600 teachers, I send it to my coordination teacher", so there are about eight people having it and even in my STAG it was already. (#3474697) but she didn't have it. (# 3474701)... maybe they should work more about that, yeah...

but, you know, it wasn't problem. It was just like funny that they didn't talk between each other. (#3474708)

I think that there should be more pressure on workers who are doing coordinators for students for Erasmus. (#3484975)

Therefore, these recommendations for during would influence directly the experience when it has already begun and the student is enjoying it.

5. Discussion

With the grounded theory approach, the researcher has the task of comparing his findings with existing related literature in the discussion chapter (Birks & Mills, Grounded Theory: a Practical Guide, 2015; Glaser B. G., 1998). In fact, the researcher had the duty of keeping the distance from contents of studies that would have contaminated and undermined the final theory. It is in this part of the thesis that it is appropriate not only to provide a personal view of the findings, but also comparing them with the conclusions of other research studies.

In the first instance, this research study presented an overview of the Erasmus experience, providing details about the development of the mobility processes. The processes described are internal, for instance students' feelings, as well as external, such as contextual influences. Answering the first research question and the related set list of sub-questions allowed the researcher to have an overview of the Erasmus experience from the students' point of view. Talking about the period previous the mobility experience, some important factors that motivate the students to go abroad are also fun and leisure activities. These aspects might been seen as contrasting with the academic focus of the Erasmus programme. In this regards, Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, and Axelsson (2015, p. 861) explain that such enjoyment has to be visualised as a means for personal and professional growth. In fact, in this way, the mobility students are exposed to the host culture and they are encouraged to socialise in an international environment. Furthermore, as they go back home, their academic interest is considered more relevant. The findings about the expectations and reasons to go on mobility and for the specific destination country meet consistency (Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, & Axelsson, 2015).

In this study, an interesting way to see the pandemic implications emerged. In this regard, the Covid-19 complications and restrictions were not seen as an obstacle or a problem to face, as the researcher conceived the matter before his study. Rather, they were part of the context and the mobility students arranged their experiences accordingly. They have just postponed the period of mobility, instead of actively dealing with the implications of the restrictions.

If it is true that the Covid-19 contextual implications forced the students to move their experiences in terms of time, it is also true that it did not represent a menace to the experience itself. The interviewees affirmed that the pandemic situation has not changed their goal of going and enjoying the Erasmus mobility. Quite the contrary, in a certain point of view, because the online lessons during lockdowns had prepared fertile ground for online distance lessons with the home institutions during the mobility period. Therefore, beside problems concerning the worst pandemic peaks, the Covid-19 crisis has not implied any relevant long-term effect to the Erasmus programme itself. In fact, the surely undermining problems were others, and they involved the quality of UPOL employees' support, such as bureaucracy issues and communication with the academic staff. Shortly the focus will converge on that topic, but for now let us proceed gradually.

Asoodar, Atai and Baten (2017) have analysed the Erasmus students perceptions before, during and after the mobility period, concerning the needed aspects and details to make the Erasmus experience successful. In this regard, their study shows that the alumni evaluate the aspect of becoming independent an essential feature for the successful Erasmus experience. Consistently, some respondents of this research mentioned the drive of the independence that the Erasmus enhanced. Asoodar, Atai and Baten (2017) found other two factors: gaining a different perspective, and establishing new international relationships. These two aspects are constant with the answers of the students for this thesis. The students stated that these expectations

were in their intentions already before their departure. This aspect of meeting new international people has been merged into other subcategories that explain the desire to know different cultures and have new experiences. Other consistent features are "having fun" and "improve the communication skills" (Asoodar, Atai, & Baten, Successful Erasmus Experience: Analysing Perceptions before, during and after Erasmus, 2017, p. 93).

On the other hand, the findings are constant also talking about the least relevant features for joining the Erasmus programme. The "feeling European" has not been mentioned even once during the interviews; neither has the importance of getting good grades, nor the desire of constructing networks for the future career (Asoodar, Atai, & Baten, Successful Erasmus Experience: Analysing Perceptions before, during and after Erasmus, 2017, pp. 93-94). About this last work employment factor, all the more reason to consider the context of a country like the Czech Republic, which had the second lowest youth unemployment rate in Europe in 2021 (Eurostat, 2023); work does not represent a pressing factor to the students.

As just said, it is true that young Czechs find jobs easily, however it does not mean that the financials do not play any roles in the Erasmus experience. Every interviewee has mentioned the Erasmus fund and its importance, despite the interviewer having not explicitly asked her. Many were afraid not to be able to fulfil the requirements for the programme and consequently lose the Erasmus grant. Almost everyone shared the vital role of the parents' financial support. These financial aspects related to the Erasmus experience find continuity with Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, Wit, & Vujić (2013). This team's study researched the shortcomings of the Erasmus programme that undermine the students' motivation to join the mobility. The low financial grant is a fatal deterrent to some students. It is well-supported that the further financial weight is for many the most impacting deterrent (Vögtle, 2019).

A central problem for this thesis, which finds consistency, is that many students do not apply for the mobility dissuaded by "the lack of integration of studies at home and abroad, and expected difficulties with credit transfer" (Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, Wit, & Vujić, 2013, p. 73). These two barriers are well documented in the previous chapter of this thesis, referring to Bureaucracies Issues, in particular learning agreement complications. The students fear the overload that those obstacles might imply. In fact, too often the Erasmus students are **not able to equate subjects** of their home universities with those of the receiving institutions. Consequently, they have to arrange a way to be able to fulfil not only the Erasmus requirements, but also the home institution's requirements for the semester. In the sub-paragraph Recommendations for Future Actions, the researcher makes proposals for institutional corrections that would implement these shortcomings.

Changing focus, the participants of this research have successfully experienced the Erasmus mobility, but many others might have found these aspects too dissuading. Indeed, these fears are well founded. What is not founded is the fear of losing relationships. According to Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, Wit, & Vujić (2013) this is a common deterrent for students that do not consider joining the mobility. This would be one key deterring factor: the fear of losing relationships (Vögtle, 2019). However, those who joined the programme realised the falsity of such dissuading ideas. In this thesis research, it has been demonstrated that the responding students that have been on Erasmus do not see this factor as undermining, showing qualitative consistency with the team's quantitative results. In conclusions, those researchers underlined the role of the institutions in communicating the information clearly and "to put greater emphasis on opportunities for personal development and the establishment of new relationships without losing old ones" (Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, Wit, & Vujić, 2013, p. 76). Subsequently, the interviewees of this thesis have called attention to the

central role of the **communication** between institutions' staff and Erasmus students too.

The focus of this research was not to investigate the cultural impact that the Erasmus experience implies. However, the interviewees have commented on this matter. They often have compared their culture with the hosting countries', or those of other international students. The researchers have not deepened the topic during the interviews, however these anecdotes show the comparison that the outgoing students have made between their home country context and the receiving countries' ones. Consistency is evident with Asoodar, Atai, & Baten (2017). This team of researchers shows the socio-cultural differences awareness that the students unintentionally experienced. Similarly, without being asked, the respondents provided details that reflect that culture's comparison.

5.1. Limitations

As demonstrated, this thesis research meets continuity with other studies. Anyhow, despite the study having been conducted diligently and seriously, it has some limitations. Firstly, about the methods adopted. Secondly, regarding the contents analysed.

Probably, the most evident limitation is that the approach adopted does not allow the results to be generalizable to the rest of the UPOL's population, and probably not even the rest of the Faculty of Education. Obviously, even less generalizable to the students of other universities. The first reason is the sample size (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015): to conduct a research with a validity for the whole Faculty, the researcher had to involve at least a few students from each department, for instance.

Then, as this research project is for a master thesis, the researcher conducted the interviews alone. The fact of interviewing all the respondents on his own might imply hidden biases in the way the interviewer poses the questions, for instance, or some facial reactions that might unconsciously influence the interviewees answers (Bell, Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science, 2010). To prevent this risk, it is recommended to divide the interviews with other interviewers, as "where a team of interviewers is employed, serious bias may show up in data analysis, but if one researcher conducts a set of interviews, the bias may be consistent and therefore go unnoticed" (Bell, 2010, p. 166).

Changing the subject, about contents analysed, the interviews failed in providing detailed information about the bureaucracy procedures and staff that are involved in the process. If all the interviewees had provided focused information on the details, for instance the names of the personnel involved in dealing with the most problematic bureaucracy, the study would have been able to track the problem at its root. In this way, the researcher would be able to find the issue point, the specific rings of the chain to intervene on.

Lastly, the fact of interviewing just students that have successfully participated to the Erasmus programme excludes from the sample students that failed the requirements of the programme, students that, at some point of the application process, have been dissuaded, and students that have not even considered the Erasmus mobility. As the participants for this research project are students who have successfully completed a mobility period, the researcher does not take into consideration the experiences of those that have not taken part in the Erasmus programme. The potential excluded participants might have provided a different view, and, consequently, additional keys to interpret the support from the UPOL's staff.

5.2. Recommendations for future research

First, in line with what has been said in the Limitations sub-chapter, future research studies could enlarge the validity of the theory to the rest of the Faculty, and, perhaps, replicate the study for the other Faculties of the University. In particular, the improvements imply the inclusion of representative students for more departments or faculties, and the cooperation in a team of interviewers.

Furthermore, as described in the Discussion of this thesis, Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, Wit, and Vujić (2013) have illustrated that the different barriers and the deterrent factors differ in intensity between students that have successfully experienced the Erasmus mobility, students that have considered it but have not tried, and students that have not even desired it. Future researchers could take these groups into consideration, in order to cover the fatal undermining aspects.

Lastly, the researchers should restrict the research field, and converge deeper focus on Erasmus bureaucracy and its processes and on the communication between students and employees as well as just between employees. Such research might describe more meticulously the various phases of the Erasmus experience, and uncover hidden aspects.

5.3. Recommendations for future actions

In the first instance, the leaks in the communication between the two universities and/or between a university and the Erasmus student are blatant. Many Erasmus students reported dysfunctional communication with their superiors. The matter is not isolated; they are recurrent problems that the

outgoing students have to deal with. The Faculty of Education's staff is invited to be more considerate of their students and their needs. Many reported the lack of information provided before the departure. This fact implies that the personnel should carefully check offer by offer the context of the host universities and their cities and countries. Then, the employee has to communicate the key information to the students, even when it seems obvious that they are aware of those details. The coordinator could facilitate the student's mobility by anticipating those complications regarding the credits issues and subjects recognition mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, the UPOL's Faculty of Education personnel in general should definitely consider the idea of adopting some strategies to fix and prevent the bureaucracy shortcomings for the students. One of these could be better cooperation with and between personnel. In this regard, talking about "personnel", it does not include just the Erasmus coordinators and other Erasmus officers, but also those professors of subjects that the students are not able to match with the subjects of the hosting universities. In fact, they could make available a study plan for those alumni that are not able to attend the classes, understanding the additional workload that it would imply in the students' daily life on Erasmus.

Another facet of the difficulty is the problem of not being able to equate subjects. The courses' responsible employees should take into consideration the Erasmus programme equating process. The UPOL's subjects, as they are organised, do not meet the students' needs, when they have to match them with host universities' subjects for an eventual Erasmus experience. These considerations would eradicate the deterring factor of the difficult equating subjects.

The staff seems not to be completely aware of the potential and the benefits that the Erasmus experience entails. Surely, the Faculty should seriously rise awareness in its employees, about the positive abilities that students might develop and all the Erasmus-related needs and implications for the students.

Finally, the Faculty would enhance the students' participation in the mobility by providing them information from alumni who have been on Erasmus already. There are such platforms, where interested students can browse their host institution or apply search filters to specify the online search. The online address for such details is, erasmus-databaze.naep.cz/modules/Erasmus; and the page is named "Erasmus student's reports database"[10]. There, they will find comments and experiences of other students that have already been hosted by the same institution. This is the kind of information that the outgoing students are probably expecting their coordinators to provide. Therefore, in all likelihood, they are not aware of its existence. Hence, the personnel could share more tips and tools for a successful Erasmus. Other researchers suggest adopting these measures, in order to incentivise students' independence (Asoodar, Atai, & Baten, Successful Erasmus Experience: Analysing Perceptions before, during and after Erasmus, 2017).

5.4. Conclusions

Adopting the grounded theory approach, this thesis project has provided an overview of the Erasmus experience, empathising with the outgoing students. Furthermore, it has contributed to improve the quality of the support provided by the UPOL's Faculty of Education. The results of this thesis meet consistency with the findings of the research in this field.

Despites its positive outcomes, the Erasmus mobility entails complications for the students. The interviewees reported many difficulties especially in

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[10] "Erasmus student's reports database", Dům zahraníční spolupráce, March 14, 2023, accessed on April 16, 2023. https://erasmus-databaze.naep.cz/modules/erasmus/

regards with bureaucracy issues, and communication and cooperation with the universities' personnel.

The point of this research is not to blame nor denounce UPOL's employees. Neither is it to suggest providing students as much as they wish. The aim was to facilitate the Erasmus experience for both academic alumni and staff sides. If the personnel read the outcomes of this study in a constructive way, they could recognise the support their students need, and learn how to provide valuable ideas and tools for improving the Faculty's services. At the same time, the outcomes should give a voice to those alumni that might have felt unheard, and give them inspiration and awareness for future experiences.

Indeed, in spite of the critics to the academic staff of the previous sub-chapter, many interviewees commended and praised the quality of the exemplary support that some employees have provided. However, in this research project the spotlight was on the aspects that could be improved. It is crucial the support that the Faculty staff provide to students. Both satisfied and unsatisfied students have underlined this fact. Accordingly, outgoing students see the role of the coordinators and Erasmus officers as vital.

Nonetheless, it does not imply that other employees' working positions are not required of supporting outgoing students. Quite the contrary, every academic member plays an indispensable part in the success of the Erasmus experience. In fact, the students underlined the difficulty of recognising their home subjects as many host universities' subjects as the coordinators and Erasmus officers agree. Consequently, the alumni have additional workload related to their course's semester. The professors of these subjects should comprehend the situation and kindly facilitate the students' wish of concluding the semester positively, catching up with their classmates.

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Contents of Appendix

Introduction to the Appendix

Each code is shown in a tab. Each tab contains, firstly from the left, the unique number of that code assigned by the used coding software to that specific part of the script. Secondly, one of the letters A, B, C, D, or E, representing the interviewee that said that part. Then, the code assigned to that part. And, finally, the related part of script.

For example,

Unique number	Interviewee's assigned letter	Code	Related part of the script
3483977	*E*	*frustrating language barrier*	*But people didn't understand me, it was frustrated. Like, when I came from airport to the bus, I was speaking to the bus driver in English, like, "I want to get somewhere. " and he was like "Qué?" I was like "Oh my God…"*

During the coding phase, the researcher used abbreviations. Furthermore, in order to accelerate the coding process, no capital letters have been used for codes.

Abbreviations

upol = University Palacký of Olomouc

esn = Erasmus Student Network (ESN)

peda f = faculty of education (Pedagogická fakulta)

uni / unis = university / universities

dorm = dormitory

eng = English

cz = Czech / Czech Republic

esp = Spanish / Spain

ita = Italian / Italy

ua = Ukraine / Ukrainian

ru = Russia / Russian

tr = Turkey / Turkish

fi = Finland / Finnish / Finn

sts = students

prof / profs = professor / professors

coord / cords = coordinator / coordinators

erasmuser / erasmusers = student / students on Erasmus mobility

app = university's smartphone application / platform / software system

situa = situation

info = information

covid = (related to) Covid-19

vs = versus – used for "versus coding" (Saldaña, 2013)

pre = before

post = after

la = learning agreement

1. Appendix A – Experience

1.1. Causal conditions

1.1.1. Reasons

Place

Desiring it since long ago

3457744	B	motivation: "my dream country"	I always wanted to go there

Many factors for it

3479801	E	many factors for mobility	Because... there was more factors.

Interest

3479798	E	interesting country	because I was interested in that country.

Weather

3479753	D	like esp weather	also the weather is nice.

Studies

3480781	E	motivating interesting subjects	And, also, I was interested in those subjects, because...

Partner

3485929	A	motivation: with partner	And the main factor was that my boyfriend had the same at least like country and the same town too with me so we decided to go together to apply to Istanbul.

Relatives

3457772	B	brother preceded	when I got older my brother went to Finland for Erasmus.

Travel

Language

3485968	A	motivation: improve eng	of course have a better English, you know, like approved it.

New experiences, Travelling, Study abroad

3479041	C	new experience factor	I want to have new experience
3485971	A	motivation: new cultures	And, you know, meet new people, new culture.
3501590	D	motivation: travelling	I just wanted to go somewhere.
3485952	A	motivation: study abroad	I always wanted to go study abroad

Change environment

3485975	A	motivation: change post covid	And after COVID it was it was nice change do not be at home and travel and having new experiences.
3500310	D	difficult in a girls class	I will be honest, as much as I can. So, we are a class full of girls, and it's really crazy to stay all the time with just girls.
3500344	D	motivation: change environment	So, I wanted to change the place, and change the people, I needed to clear my mind a little. So, that's why I choose to go on Erasmus.

Solo challenge

3457785	B	motivated travelling	I always wanted to have that experience you know to travel somewhere by yourself

1.1.2. Expectations

Free time

Fun

| 3485992 | A | expecting fun | and there's gonna be, you know, fun. |

Excited

| 3457886 | B | pre-excitement | I was just super excited |

Travel

| 3485996 | A | expecting travelling | We will travel, |

Events, parties

| 3500392 | D | esp erasmusers in cz always party | Because, usually, when Spanish students are coming to Czech Republic, on the Erasmus, I see them, like, all the time partying, and so on. So, I was like "OK, so, probably, when I go to Spain, I have nothing to do, I will just travel, and party, no studies." |

New friends

| 3480077 | E | expecting international friends | I thought that I'd make some friends from different countries. |

Learning
Culture

| 3485998 | A | expecting new culture | learn about the culture. Yeah . |

Language

| 3485987 | A | expecting improving eng | improve my English |

Supportive personnel

| 3480075 | E | expecting more helpful coords | my coordinator from Czech, also from Spain, will be more helpful. |

Easy

350038 0	D	expectation: esp easy	I applied for Spain, so I was thinking maybe it's gonna be really easy.

1.1.3. Application and preparation

Communication from UPOL

No events

3479117	C	no upol erasmus events	No, not event
348028 2	E	surprising no upol personnel inciting	I don't remember that some professor talk about it, or anything. I was also surprised that nobody from school is like "yes, do it, go, it's good." Like, no one. or I don't remember...

Personnel supporting

347909 6	C	coord motivating travelling	and she's really nice to people and can explain things really easy and well. So – and I finish – she's always... she was always really into travelling.
3479100	C	inspiring interview with coord	So, when I was there, like, the interview, which places are possible.
3479102	C	coord's inspiring experience	I saw that she was everywhere, it was very nice.
3479104	C	coord motivating travelling	Yeah, maybe she was the main person

Making choices

3485915	A	primary edu lot of offers	Yeah I had a lot of option because of my education, primary education.

Dealing learning agreement before departure

Confusing

3458330	B	la confusing	Maybe, there was the only a thing, that I was a bit confused and I don't really like was that... about that learning agreement.

Stressful

3458608	B	la biggest stress	but it was probably my biggest stress about that, yeah.

Almost giving up

3483533	E	reconsider leaving	yeah... at the one point, I was thinking that maybe I will not go, because it was so many things around, and I didn't have it, because I didn't know.

Everything dealt

3458604	B	positive outcome	but it doesn't matter... so, everything is cool OK

Accommodation

Problematic

3500646	D	biggest problem: finding accomodation	The biggest problem for me was the accommodation, to find accommodation in Spain.

Language barrier

3500651	D	websites esp language barrier	Yeah, because most of the website pages, they were in Spanish, and I speak really little Spanish. So, I needed to translate everything;

1.2. Context
1.2.1. Covid-19 context and influence

Positive influence

Relationships detox

348597 5	A	motivation: change post covid	And after COVID it was it was nice change do not be at home and travel and having new experiences.
3500310	D	difficult in a girls class	I will be honest, as much as I can. So, we are a class full of girls, and it's really crazy to stay all the time with just girls.
350034 4	D	motivation: change environment	So, I wanted to change the place, and change the people, I needed to clear my mind a little. So, that's why I choose to go on Erasmus.

Negative influence

Refusing online experience

347907 8	C	nuremberg offering just online erasmus	what I said before, I wanted to study in Germany but they offered just online Erasmus, so this is one big difference.

Delayed

350044 5	D	covid delayed	I supposed to go on a Erasmus a year before, than I went but the Covid came.

Examining situation

348011 0	E	waiting for easing covid restrictions	so I was kind of waiting, and hoping that the situation will be under control.

Unimportant influence

Pandemic when appling

347906 3	C	covid when applied	yeah it was maybe it's not the beginning but maybe, like, last wave or the wave before the last one. So, it was a little bit different

Not influencing the choice

348600 0	A	no covid influence	No, it didn't influence my choice, I always wanted to go.

1.2.2. General context

Unrealised previous studies wishes

Limited opportunities

3479787	E	pre studies: limited erasmus choice	and we didn't have so many opportunities; I could go only to Slovakia or Poland.

Cancelled plans

3457769	B	pre studies	I want to go there go there to Erasmus to Portugal because I studied Portuguese, but I quitted before I went there

Inspiring and stimulating

Projects

3457700	B	project international day	I always wanted to go to Finland, because, it's like stupid, but when I was in 4th grade, in my school we had a project day and this time it was about like International Day so in our class we picked some... we chose or we got I don't remember countries and we have to write something about them and I got Finland.

Already experienced abroad

3485956	A	work abroad experience	because I already worked abroad many times.

Cool travellers

3479037	C	mobility inspiration since teen age	when I was in my high school age, I really liked people who participated, like, on university.

"my drive", "my choice"

3480251	E	mobility no external influence	but this was, like... but it was, I think, it was my drive to do it.
3500582	D	"my choice"	So, first of all, it was just my choice.

No other people influencing

3480222	E	mobility no external influence	So, but it wasn't because of professors, or like some people.

Support

Coordinator

3479091	C	coord motivating travelling	Maybe, it was one person, one professor we had.

Family financially

3480290	E	family supportive financially	my family helped me a lot, also with financials and... because for me it was kind of expensive

Family

3457937	B	encouraging parents	my parents quite pushed me to do this

Deterring aspects

Others' xenophobia

3499761	A	mother grandma afraid something happening	So they were scared that they will kill me or I don't what, because I have a skirt or something. Like my grandma she was scared too.

Others' sadness

3458260	B	partner unhappy	there was maybe a little problem about my fiancé, because he wasn't really happy that leaving there for that long. So, it was a little bit harder, because of it.

Reactions to deterring

"it didn't change my mind"

3500602	D	not changing mind for friends	but it didn't change my mind, so…

Important personal experience

3458272	B	important personal experience	But, you know, for me was like okay, but this is very important for me, so you have to get it.

Ignoring

3499788	A	not believing close-minded relatives	but I was laughing. I was like "naagh, its not gonna be like that" like I was not believing them.

1.2.3. Financially affordable

Family support

3458173	B	family supportive financially	And my brother was totally: "if you will be missing some money, I will give you whatever you need."
3458178	B	family supportive financially	so my family was, like, my whole family was very supporting about this.
3480290	E	family supportive financially	my family helped me a lot, also with financials and… because for me it was kind of expensive

Common issue for students

3457966	B	money is a common erasmusers' worry	Because many people was afraid about this, because of the money situation.

1.3. Phenomenon

1.3.1. Expectation vs reality

Studies

International classes

3496087	A	expecting international class	and I thought that I would be in international class, you know, because it's Erasmus, they always put the people together and, like, to exchange the, I don't know, everything
3496092	A	unexpectedly tr classmates	but I was studying with Turkish people in education of ...

Harder

3501368	D	false info easy erasmus	So, when somebody will tell you "go to Spain on Erasmus, it's easy!" it's NOT!

Free time activities

Travelling more

3498779	A	less travelling around than expected	I think I travelled a lot, but because the school was like not hard, but I needed to attend every day, you know. I was not able to travel as much as I wanted, but still.

More events

3479054	C	expecting more events	but I thought that the organisation which invited us for Erasmus will make more events or more parties or more events.

1.3.2. Making new friends

Meeting at events

3498204	A	make new friends sts	so sometimes happen that we were in a party and I really like in common with some girl or

			like boy girl like talking and yeah like good friends you know
3498210	A	lose new friends	and then you just lost them because there's so many schools and so many people and everything so we never saw each other for example anymore you know
3498214	A	fun: many people met	that was fun, so many people.

Thanks to partner

3496315	A	international friends thanks to partner's	And then in daily life like I because of my boyfriend I was able to meet some international people which was nice too yeah and easy to connect easy to talk.

With flatmates

3484828	E	easy making new friends in big flat	it was kind of random, like... Because I lived in that big house, for me it was easy to make new friends from the beginning.

Supporting reciprocally

3484836	E	growing friendships	it was really good, because of that, because from the beginning we went together to parties. also girls were alone, they didn't know each other. So, we kind of stick together from the beginning and we are going to Erasmus . . . [city of mobility] , yeah
3484842	E	parties with friends	So, in the beginning we were going with them everywhere like to parties were going from beginning till the end.

Giving support

348489 4	E	supporting german erasmuser	So, I started speaking with him and I was supporting him, like "yeah, you have to go out, it's okay." Yeah, so, I was glad that even for him in the end it was good experience. that was very good.

Challenge

348395 3	E	challenge: making new friends	and the challenges were, like, meeting new people, about making new friends

Still in contact

349830 5	A	nice local contact	And we are still in contact and yeah that was nice.

1.3.3. Group activities

ESN well planned

350344 8	B	esn great actvities	Maybe I would like to mention, that yes, and the Erasmus Students Network had very good – had really good – activities planned for students. So, if you have participate in it, it was amazing with these people. So, it was super nice to participate.

ESN helpful

348848 90	E	esn helpful	But, I think that ESN is helping a lot to people from different countries who are going there.

Search independently

347930 5	C	found choir activity	because I find another organisation which organised a choir, so we were singing in the big group.

Loneliness

347929 7	C	"yourself like a partner"	but it means that you are, I don't know, many hours there alone, maybe... if you don't have any school or any programme it means that you have just yourself, like a partner.

1.4. Intervening condition
1.4.1. Support

Met during the experience
Classmates for public transport

3495968	A	classmates support public transport	So I contacted some classmates and I tried to, like, talk with them

ESN helpful

34848 90	E	esn helpful	But, I think that ESN is helping a lot to people from different countries who are going there.

Professors straightforward

350344 4	B	rely on any profs for explanation	I was so surprised that... and even if there was something unclear I could ask first person

Flatmates with language

348378 2	E	ita flatmates learning esp	and there were some Italians. they were learning Spanish

Flatmate for internet

347917 2	C	flatmate temporary solved internet	So, he helped me to solve that, just temporary but so it was fine.

Buddy for internet

3473050	B	buddy internet tips	and he texted me back that I should buy the SIM card they have like the DNA SIM card

Environment

3474112	B	supportive fi surrounding	and then, I could talk basic about everything with many people there, like, with the Erasmus students. and even the teachers were very welcoming and they told us in every problem we could, like, ask them for help or anything we need, so...

Knew already before

Staff, sharing subjects

3496193	A	profs sharing possible subjects	So, anyway, yeah they sent me the, like, all the subjects they have and which I can take.

Foreign officer with bureaucracies

3484805	E	foreign officer helping leaving paper	and, like, the secretary, she was nice to me she was like "okay, I know Spain people..." so, we tried to manage it

Family, distance

3474091	B	family distance backing	I always could count on my family, of course, but, you know, it was from distance.

Coordinator familiar

3501332	D	coord the most supportive	and it was really nice. So, she was our big bigger, biggest, the biggest help.

Other Erasmus students for learning agreement

347463 8	B	classmates' support la	So, me and other Erasmus students were just texting each other and guessing what to do.

1.4.2. Activities affordability

ESN convenient

348488 5	E	convenient esn events	but we went to trips with them, it was easy to sign up, and to pay, it was even cheap. So, it was okay

Affordable

34793 07	C	affordable group activities	it wasn't free, but it was really cheap. So, everyone can do it.

Cheap self-organised trips

348488 9	E	cheap trip with friends	We took a car from companies rent a car. So, we could travel for on those islands by ourselves and it was really cheap. Like, when we went to Ibiza, we were sleeping in car. So, we could save some money. Yeah, it was stressful, but we were like "OK, we can do it, we will save some money." So, you don't have to pay for some hostels, or hotels, so that was good.

Dormitory expensive

34837 64	E	didn't want dorm	I didn't want the dormitory and it was also really expensive

Expensive Covid-19 test

34736 00	B	cheap home covid test for travelling	you could do that like home test, you don't have to pay for it.

1.5. Strategies
1.5.1 Personal improvements

Language

349878 8	A	improving eng	Yeah but, I don't know, I think I approved my English at least a little bit.

Culture

349879 1	A	cultural exchange	I learn something about the culture. I have some international friends, which I wanted to have and try.

Inspiration for future actions

349832 1	A	joining esn cz	Yeah, after the Erasmus experience I came back and join the Erasmus student network here.

Independence

3485047	E	out of comfort zone	I stood outside of my comfort zone.

1.5.2. Adaptation

Not judging culture

347336 9	B	new culture	So, for me it was new that no one was judging anyone

Self-inviting culture

3473539	B	talk more challenge	And, maybe, one challenge for me was to talk more with people
3473553	B	inviting yourself culture	to more interested when they are planning, because you had to ask for being invited, basically.
3473556	B	self invitation difficult	it was hard for me to ask to be invite, so this was my big challenge

Learning local language

3483979	E	challenge speaking esp	but I learned something, so it was, yeah... It was challenging me, I tried to learn something, try to speak more Spanish, some basic things, like I could order in restaurant, or things like that, so... it was the new challenge for me, yeah.

Weather and clothes

3484400	E	warm esp clothes vs her	and I was there in fire, like, I couldn't understand it... also, like, there are times when someone had jacket on him, and I was like "how can someone be here in jacket?!"

1.5.3. Language barrier

Local classmates not inclusive

3498290	A	tr sts able but not speaking eng	Even though they study English and they are supposed to know English the best, you know, and they will teach the kids and everything. They are able to speak, but they did not want to speak with me I don't know why.

Relating with Erasmus students

3483957	E	more relations with erasmusers than locals	in class, like, the people from Erasmus, in the end, we were talking a lot to each other

Locals not speaking English

3479256	C	language barrier to get help	and the man, who repaired the screen spoke only German and my German wasn't enough, for this, so… I need to write, like, official… there was a question about your problem, so I made this and translated German. So, it was easier to use this formula. but it wasn't such a big deal. I survived.

1.5.4. Frustration feelings

Anger for papers misunderstandings

3496032	A	angry tr subjects on la	So, I was reeeally angry.

Frustrating

3483977	E	frustrating language barrier	But people didn't understand me, it was frustrated. Like, when I came from airport to the bus, I was speaking to the bus driver in English, like, "I want to get somewhere." and he was like "Qué?" I was like "Oh my God…"

Nervous for papers misunderstandings

3483717	E	stress esp subjects confusion	So, I started stressed out.

Scaring workload

3496267	A	scaring workload	I was scared about the exams, because I had to write like 3000 words about critical thinking after reading some thesis about something written by the professor in English everything, but yeah, it was nice.

Desperation for no help

348375 0	E	desperate for no support	I don't know... I was desperate, like... I didn't know what to do. So, I was sitting with those subjects, like, for more than one day, and I was looking at it.

Anger for no help

348481 8	E	angry for personnel disburden	it took me two and half months. it was... it was... yeah, it was crazy. Like, I was really pissed out, and everything, because how? why and how? I don't know...

1.6. Consequences
1.6.1. Positive feedback

Empathising with personnel

349965 7	A	difficult managing, seeing in profs point of view	It's hard to say for me, you know, because I'm not there and I think everything like "in pink" but maybe.. it's hard to manage everything.

Hosts professors responsible

350344 4	B	rely on any profs for explanation	I was so surprised that... and even if there was something unclear I could ask first person

Supportive officer

349967 7	A	foreign officer upol	But I know that in our pedagogical faculty there is some girl, and she will be, if you have some questions about Erasmus or something, you can like, go and visit her in her office and talk about it. Which is nice, I think.

Professors happy for mobility

3498953	A	cz profs happy for choosing erasmus	Like yeah, yeah, yeah, let's go. I think they were happy that someone wants to go, you know.

Including subjects of the semester in learning agreement

3498936	A	helpful flexibility individual plan during	When I was doing the learning agreement, I was able to put there, I think a lot of subject from Czech Republic, which I will studying in Turkey and they will accept it. You know, that was nice, because the one, that tutor of me, was the one who is the leader of all the, like, all the faculty I went to, you know, from. So he just said "yeah, if it's wrong, it's on me" you know.

Life changing

3474717	B	life changing opportunity	I'm just really glad that I had it opportunity to go there it was life changing.

Fulfilled

3474542	B	exciting expectations fulfilled	Probably, nothing, because I expect it will be amazing and it was. I didn't expect, like, any one total way it will be perfect, I was just like "okay it will be amazing". and it really was. So, my expectations weren't disappointing and I was super excited.

Better

3485045	E	better experience than expected	But, still, it was even better than I thought. Yeah, everything

1.6.2. Recommending experience to other students

Providing contacts of older students on mobility

350138 5	D	tip: share erasmus experiences	I would say to them my experiences. and then they can make their own, you know, imagine on the Erasmus.

Going with someone

349993 7	A	good going on mobility with friend	I was thinking if its ok, to go like in couple, if its gonna be the same, if its not gonna be like less or something, but at the end I am happy that we went together, Because, yeah, its better to go together. And when I was there I noticed most of the people are going together, not as a couple but for example as a friends. Friend together, support each other.

Suggesting

347455 0	B	recommending erasmus	So, I could recommend it to everyone who it's like on doubts, yeah, he should go for sure, like, just amazing.

2. Appendix B – Support

2.1. Phenomena

2.1.1. Bureaucracy issues

Learning agreement issues

Already deal

3496012	A	tr subjects on la	They let me sign for some subjects, you know, even I was in Czech Republic, yeah. I like made the learning agreement, they signed it, my professor signed it, everyone signed it.

Confusing

3474643	B	la confusing	Yeah, basically it was about this (learning agreement).
3479333	C	difficult filling la	yes. it was quite hard to know the learning agreement.
3479337	C	not clear LA structure	When you download the paper where you fill in the courses and the stuff, that it wasn't structured like this is the one Word document and you know there is everything valid for what you have to do.

Struggling minimum credits

3496039	A	struggling minimum credits	I had to change them and I was almost not able to take the limits of credits I should, you know, the minimum, I was almost not able to reach that.

Needing coordinator's signature

3498524	A	needing la signature coord	And I needed his signature to change the learning agreement.

Fear grant back

348369 7	E	no pay grant back	So, I don't have to put money back, or something.

Dates of stay paper issues

Confusing

34792 40	C	tr doubts	At the end of Erasmus we had to sign some papers, but no one knows which one of them and to what date.

Fear grant back

348479 3	E	worried grant back	I was totally angry and I was worried that I will have to put like every, like, whole budget back.

Unavailable office

348472 0	E	esp office unexpectedly closed	So, I went there around, like, afternoon, and it was closed. everything was close, like they didn't upload it on Internet, just, like, that day someone had to go home earlier, and it was closed.

Late

348473 2	E	last chance for signing leaving papers	because I was supposed to leave the next day in the morning. So, I knew it was last chance,

Date mistake

348475 4	E	mistake on leaving paper	and, also, I came there, like, I don't know, 20th of something and the paper said that I'm there from 10th of something. So, I don't understand.

Host inflexibility

348476 9	E	dates misunderstanding with esp coord	and then when she answered she was like "okay, so tell me when were you last time in school, like, because of exam?" that they will do it from that day. I was like "I wasn't in school for exam in January, because I didn't have to, so like no."

Other bureaucracies' issues

Contacting personally everyone for equating

347468 7	B	communicating equate subjects	and even when I send them that transcript of records from Finland - because I need to send it to them - I send it that to every teacher, while both in arrange that they will accept my subjects in Czech.

Providing papers personally to everyone

34746 97	B	annoying upol's need of transcript of records	I was like: "it's everywhere! in is in the STAG, I send it to her colleague, I send it to 600 teachers, I send it to that my coordination teacher", so there are about eight people has it and even in my STAG it was already.

Ongoing problem

34846 47	E	ongoing problems	but, yeah, I still have some things I have to still do, yeah.

2.1.2. Distance lessons

Not able to equate subjects

350150 9	D	not equating subjects	but I didn't have that similar subjects in Spain and also in Czech Republic.

3501525	D	not equating passed cz subjects	because subjects, what I had in Spain, I already had them, I passed them, in Czech Republic, like, year before. So, there was the difference.

Fulfilling all subjects for the semester

348387 1	E	contacting cz profs for not equating subjects	So, I had to write all my professors from this faculty that my subjects from Spain won't apply to this subject, so they will not, like, approve that, like, instead of the subject...

Possibility

34986 87	A	agreeing upol distance classes	I text them, if it's able for me to do it from . . . [city of mobility] , you know. Like do the exams and everything. And then some of them say yes, like most of them said yes, so it's nice.

Not possible

349870 2	A	cz profs refusing distance lessons	And it was funny, because at the end they had online classes, and the test was online. Yeah and I think it's it's not like.. you have to respond to me, it's your work but they just ignore me. And other one, yeah the same like, she said no you have to attend the classes.

Individual plan

3483896	E	cz supportive profs individual tasks	So, they just told me to do some work – extra work – and with some professors I had exams when I came back.
349876 4	A	cz profs using tr mobility for subjects	And some of them were really like.. really understood like.. they could understand me
3498771	A	tr individual hw distance subject	so they said yeah just you know just write about how this subject looks in Turkey. Which was nice, because in Turkey they do

			not have that subjects. So I just wrote like, why they do not have that, but what they have, instead of that. And put some photos inside.. and they loved it. Yeah it was nice, so nice.

Extra assignments about mobility

3498771	A	tr individual hw distance subject	so they said yeah just you know just write about how this subject looks in Turkey. Which was nice, because in Turkey they do not have that subjects. So I just wrote like, why they do not have that, but what they have, instead of that. And put some photos inside.. and they loved it. Yeah it was nice, so nice.

Overload

3483863	E	overloaded semester	But, because it was a lot things at one time
3483864	E	subjects overload semester	because I had to do things for my Spanish school and also I had, like, 12 subjects here in Czechia, in the same semester.
3501555	D	hard cz and erasmus subjects together	Yeah, so, I did like two universities at the same time. That was the deal. It was hard.

Glad

3498715	A	distance cz subjects glad	So I said "yea, why not". And I am happy that I did that.

Sharing with other Erasmus students

3498721	A	other erasmusers distance classes too	For example the others who I talked with, they texted me and I said them, how to do it, and they did the same. So they were taking the classes even though they were on Erasmus.

Postponed master

3483803	E	problem cz subjects	So, another problem were with my subjects in Czechia, here.
3483860	E	master degree end postponed for erasmus	Because, when I was going to Erasmus, I wanted to do my master degree, like, last year.
3483863	E	overloaded semester	But, because it was a lot things at one time

2.2. Context

2.2.1. Dealing learning agreement before departure

Confusing

3458330	B	la confusing	Maybe, there was the only a thing, that I was a bit confused and I don't really like was that... about that learning agreement.

Stressful

3458608	B	la biggest stress	but it was probably my biggest stress about that, yeah.

Almost giving up

3483533	E	reconsider leaving	yeah... at the one point, I was thinking that maybe I will not go, because it was so many things around, and I didn't have it, because I didn't know.

Everything dealt

3458604	B	positive outcome	but it doesn't matter... so, everything is cool OK

2.2.2. Reasons for that place

Desiring it since long ago

3457744	B	motivation: "my dream country"	I always wanted to go there

Many factors for it

3479801	E	many factors for mobility	Because... there was more factors.

Interest

3479798	E	interesting country	because I was interested in that country.

Weather

3479753	D	like esp weather	also the weather is nice.

Studies

3480781	E	motivating interesting subjects	And, also, I was interested in those subjects, because...

2.2.3. Learning expectations

Culture

3485998	A	expecting new culture	learn about the culture. Yeah .

Language

3485987	A	expecting improving eng	improve my English

Easy

3500380	D	expectation: esp easy	I applied for Spain, so I was thinking maybe it's gonna be really easy.

2.3. Causal conditions

2.3.1. Hosts' language

Coordinator said English is enough

3483964	E	info need just eng	also, like, my school taught me that there is totally OK to only speak English
3483967	E	informing no esp speaker	because I told him that I don't speak Spanish.
3483969	E	coord ensuring enough eng	and . . . [UPOL employee] : "it's OK to speak only English, it's totally OK, like, you will manage to do everything, and anything."
3483970	E	esp sts no eng	but it wasn't like that. Like, normal Spanish students didn't speak English that much.

English should have been enough

3484957	E	practice: knowing eng enough	And, again, we are at the problem that I was supposed to only speak English and then I'm in school where everybody speaks Spanish

Few English subjects

3496141	A	only few eng subjects	And I was only able to take some of them, because only some of the classes were all in English. And that's the one I could take.

Subjects in local language

3496016	A	surprised tr classes	Then I came there, I joined the lessons and I found out that they are in Turkish - that was a big surprise.

Internship in local language

348494 9	E	practice: difficult integration	and I was there, and I was supposed to help them, you know. and they will only speak Spanish, like, they couldn't even write, or read, and I was there to help them. So, I was like sitting there, like mmm yeah...

Host professors' bad English

350109 0	D	esp profs not good eng	but also, with English, our teachers they didn't have that good English. so, sometimes they more speak in Spanish. So, we didn't really understand them. So, that was a big deal for us.

Surprising no local language

348398 3	E	esp profs surprised no esp speaker	and also those professors were surprised that I don't speak Spanish at all.

Local classmates limited English

348397 1	E	esp classmates: the only eng speakers	only those who were in my class

2.3.2. Misunderstandings courses

Not international courses

349609 9	A	expecting studying international primary edu	Oh, yeah! that was fun too! I thought I'm going to study primary education there and it's going to be international

No individual plan

349625 3	A	not possible individual plan	For me no, so, maybe they thought it will be the same, but the teachers said "no way.". I was asking them if maybe I do not have to

			attend the class but I will take the test you know and for example write something extra or... no, no, no way yeah so many fun things happened ! ahah
3496241	A	erasmusers individual plan for tr subjects	so they get the option to not attend the classes, they just get a book in English and their task was to learn it all and then go to the exam which is gonna be special one for them in English.

Incoherence subjects

3483702	E	incoherent subjects at arrival	And, so, when I came there I found out that all my subjects I choose it's... something it was in Spanish, and something was the same subject...
3483710	E	esp subjects described vs actually	but there was one subject, okay, it was in English, like, the name, everything. and it has some number, and then I choose, like, I thought it's different subject, also in English, also the number, and everything, but then I found out that it is the same subject

Online

3495939	A	problem: half online	So, first of all, they did not tell me that it's gonna be half online and half offline.

2.3.3. Not equating subjects

3483871	E	contacting cz profs for not equating subjects	So, I had to write all my professors from this faculty that my subjects from Spain won't apply to this subject, so they will not, like, approve that, like, instead of the subject...
3483889	E	hoping in cz profs	yeah, so, I had to write all my professors, and hope they will be, like, nice, and they will give me, I don't know, some more work to do,

		supportive tasks	because I will not be at the seminars, and things like that.
3483894	E	cz profs happy for choosing erasmus	So, like, maybe half of them were like very nice about it, they were happy that someone is going to Erasmus.
3483896	E	cz supportive profs individual tasks	So, they just told me to do some work – extra work – and with some professors I had exams when I came back.
3483897	E	hard semester	So, it was hard, it was a lot of things
3501525	D	not equating passed cz subjects	because subjects, what I had in Spain, I already had them, I passed them, in Czech Republic, like, year before. So, there was the difference.

Not able to equate subjects

3501509	D	not equating subjects	but I didn't have that similar subjects in Spain and also in Czech Republic.
3501525	D	not equating passed cz subjects	because subjects, what I had in Spain, I already had them, I passed them, in Czech Republic, like, year before. So, there was the difference.

Postponed master

3483860	E	master degree end postponed for erasmus	Because, when I was going to Erasmus, I wanted to do my master degree, like, last year.

Minimum credits

3501483	D	minimum amount credits	No, no, because I could choose some subjects, and I needed, you know, 20 credits.

2.4. Intervening conditions

2.4.1. Hoped support

Hoped institutional support

Host coordinator

3483719	E	contacting esp coord	So, I get in touch with my coordinator for Spain.

UPOL coordinator

3480615	E	coord ensuring to help	and because my coordinator from Czech Republic at the interview she told me like "I will help you everything is OK."

Foreign officer UPOL

3479245	C	erasmus office help	But not organization, maybe... it was the Erasmus department. Maybe this is the right answer.

Hoped extra-institutional support

Flatmates

3483752	E	asking doubts to flatmates	then I was trying to get my help with my roommates

Buddy

3473044	B	buddy support	so, I texted the buddy

2.5. Strategies

Host coordinator

3483719	E	contacting esp coord	So, I get in touch with my coordinator for Spain.

UPOL coordinator

3480615	E	coord ensuring to help	and because my coordinator from Czech Republic at the interview she told me like "I will help you everything is OK."

Foreign officer UPOL

3479245	C	erasmus office help	But not organization, maybe... it was the Erasmus department. Maybe this is the right answer.

2.6. Consequences

2.6.1. Communicating positively

Organised

3472954	B	well organised uni app	you're not internet but here it was more organised better organised.

App

3472958	B	uni app helpful contents	And so, you find out in there basically everything you need to know even the places, if it is online or not. You went always through Teams and from Moodle, as well.

Clear

3472965	B	clear semester structure	So, we were... I think that there was nothing unclear, basically.

No need

3479269	C	no need communicating during	But when we were at Erasmus, no one cared, trust me.

2.6.2. Listened calls for help

Classmates for public transport

3495968	A	classmates support public transport	So I contacted some classmates and I tried to, like, talk with them

Staff, sharing subjects

3496193	A	profs sharing possible subjects	So, anyway, yeah they sent me the, like, all the subjects they have and which I can take.

Professors straightforward

3503444	B	rely on any profs for explanation	I was so surprised that... and even if there was something unclear I could ask first person

Flatmates with language

3483782	E	ita flatmates learning esp	and there were some Italians. they were learning Spanish

Buddy for internet

3473050	B	buddy internet tips	and he texted me back that I should buy the SIM card they have like the DNA SIM card

Flatmate for internet

3479172	C	flatmate temporary solved internet	So, he helped me to solve that, just temporary, but so it was fine.

Environment

3474112	B	supportive fi surrounding	and then, I could talk basic about everything with many people there, like, with the Erasmus students. and even the teachers were very welcoming and they told us in every problem we could, like, ask them for help or anything we need, so...

Other Erasmus students for learning agreement

3474638	B	classmates' support la	So, me and like other Erasmus students were just texting each other and guessing what to do.

Foreign officer with bureaucracies

3484805	E	foreign officer helping leaving paper	and, like, the secretary, she was nice to me she was like "okay, I know Spain people..." so, we tried to manage it

Family, distance

3474091	B	family distance backing	I always could count on my family, of course, but, you know, it was from distance.

Coordinator familiar

3501332	D	coord the most supportive	and it was really nice. So, she was our big bigger, biggest, the biggest help.

2.6.3. Positive feedback

Empathising with officers

3499657	A	difficult managing, seeing in profs point of view	It's hard to say for me, you know, because I'm not there and I think everything like "in pink" but maybe.. it's hard to manage everything.

Hosts professors responsible

3503444	B	rely on any profs for explanation	I was so surprised that... and even if there was something unclear I could ask first person

Supportive officer

3499677	A	foreign officer upol	But I know that in our pedagogical faculty there is some girl, and she will be, if you have some questions about Erasmus or something, you can like, go and visit her in her office and talk about it. Which is nice, I think.

Including subjects of the semester in learning agreement

3498936	A	helpful flexibility individual plan during	When I was doing the learning agreement, I was able to put there, I think a lot of subject from Czech Republic, which I will studying in Turkey and they will accept it. You know, that was nice, because the one, that tutor of me, was the one who is the leader of all the, like, all the faculty I went to, you know, from. So he just said "yeah, if it's wrong, it's on me" you know.

Professors happy for mobility

3498953	A	cz profs happy for choosing erasmus	Like yeah, yeah, yeah, let's go. I think they were happy that someone wants to go, you know.

2.6.4. Contacts issues

Different communication system

3496174	A	sts-prof communicating whatsapp	But they, with professors, they only talking throu Whatsapp, which is weird, but it is true, yeah.

Not answering

3484726	E	asking help to any esp profs	So, starting to calling my coordination from Spain she didn't answer on anything. So, I was going around, I was asking professors, anyone, like, what should I do.

Disburden

3484810	E	upol and esp uni personnel disburden	also they were doing ping-pong with me. my coordinator was like "yeah, write to that person and…" the same problem like here, totally.

Not replying

3498531	A	coord not replying anywhere	So I was texting him everywhere - in teams, in outlook, in other emails and everything. And then I found the number for him so I text him like through message on the phone and he did not respond. So I called him.

Busy

3479312	C	busy prof	but he was really busy.

Expensive call

3498532	A	expensive calling coord	It was so expensive.

Dismissing

34985 35	A	coord agreeing la signature	But he said "yes yes just give them my signature" and that's it.

No sense again

349865 2	A	not allowed changing la alone	I think I should not do that, but it would be so hard to contact them, because I was in Turkey already. And he was like doing something else, and not able to even text me back.. so yeah.

2.6.5. Negative feedback

Disburden

348466 1	E	personnel disburden upol	like, I always ask someone, and they were like "I don't know, maybe ask her or her..."
347300 9	B	personnel disburden upol	it wasn't like here that he will send me someone else he'll find out it for me and text me back even if he doesn't know it.

Claiming coordinator just for prestige

348497 9	E	some coord not doing their job	and, I don't know, I think that some coordinators just have status of coordinator, but they're not doing it right, or at all.

Claiming coordinator just for money

34849 96	E	maybe coord position for money	I don't know, maybe, she's just getting more money every month, because she's coordinator

Coordinator´s knowledge

349884 5	A	supposing upol personnel aware	I expect them to be the one who knows everything.

Coordinator helping

34800 75	E	expecting more helpful coords	my coordinator from Czech, also from Spain, will be more helpful.

Negative feedback questionnaire

34849 81	E	negative feedback in questionnaire	And, I think, I was doing some questions, like, anonymously, also about, like, school how is help you, and everything. I was negative like shit.

Hypotising ineffective questionnaire

34849 82	E	questionnaire not effective	but I don't think they will do anything. or I don't know, like...

„Ping-pong"

348481 0	E	upol and esp uni personnel disburden	also they were doing ping-pong with me. my coordinator was like "yeah, write to that person and..." the same problem like here, totally.

2.7. Strategies – recommendations before

2.7.1. Recommendations for before

Cooperation with staff

More cooperative

350144 1	D	deterrent: uncooperative profs	a lot of people are scared to go on the Erasmus. because of that, that they the teachers or professors in Czech Republic they will not support them

Deadlines awareness

349887 5	A	coords unaware erasmus deadlines	Or they don't even know the deadlines of Erasmus applications. Some of them.

Periods awareness

349885 3	A	upol personnel unawareness	And if they don't even know when the school is starting or..

Enthusiasm

34850 06	E	tip: more enthusiastic coord	I don't know, someone should be more interested in that topic

More caring

34849 85	E	tip: caring coord	I think that this job there is supposed to be a person who is caring about those students.

Informing where host faculty

349889 3	A	info to provide: where uni facility	And like "the school is there

Informing about accommodation

349889 4	A	info to provide: accommodation	and then there you will have unfortunately no dormitory, but you can find flat.

Informing about host university periods

3498905	A	info to provide: dates exams	And the dates when the school is starting is from there to there. They have two finals, just to be prepared.

Arranging buddy and ESN

3498901	A	info to provide: esn and buddy	I don't know like.. they have Erasmus student network do not be worried and we send then that you want to, for example have a buddy, you know.

Bureaucracy's structure

3479337	C	not clear LA structure	When you download the paper where you fill in the courses and the stuff, that it wasn't structured like this is the one Word document and you know there is everything valid for what you have to do.

Involving more students in Erasmus programme

3485061	E	tip: upol more involving in erasmus	Maybe, I think that school should talk more about Erasmus. Like, so people will go, or anything.

2.7.2. Potential changing factors retrospectively

Online

3495939	A	problem: half online	So first of all, they did not tell me that it's gonna be half online and half offline.
3495951	A	online: different past course of action	So, I think, if they told me before, I would probably don't go. It's hard to say now, you know...

Local language

348398 9	E	peda f unaware need of esp	and my faculty should know that it's better if someone likes speak more Spanish, I don't know...
348399 5	E	would learn esp	like, if I would know, I think that my preparation for Erasmus would be more about learning this language, yeah. Yeah, I think I will try to learn more.

Semester start

349599 3	A	semester starting before time	And my school started earlier than it should, like one week earlier, which I did not know that it's starting. That was fun too.

Transparency and aware

34989 11	A	tip: coord awaring sts	Are you still agreeing to go" for example you know like...

2.8. Strategies – recommendations for during

More informed

347468 4	B	upol incompetent	but yeah probably our faculty should know more.

Problems solver

348497 7	E	tip: coord problem solver	Like, they should more look at those problems

Respecting deals

3498849	A	upol personnel having obbligations	You know, the UPOL, because it's such a big institution. And it's their contract. They should work together.

More caring

3484985	E	tip: caring coord	I think that this job there is supposed to be a person who is caring about those students.

Scheduling bureaucracies step by step

3479322	C	need of scheduling deadlines	So, for me it will be better when there will be someone who just talk about things, even if I know that I have some deadline. just talk about it what is the next step may be no one told you that this will be next or blah blah... things about this experience

Communicating

3474690	B	upol foreign office needing papers	Like, again this, and then I text it to one person in that foreign, that departure for the students for the Erasmus. and other one mailed me, like two weeks later, if I could send it her, too, as well.
3474697	B	annoying upol's need of tr	I was like: "it's everywhere! in is in the STAG, I send it to her colleague, I send it to 600 teachers, I send it to that my coordination teacher", so there are about eight people has it and even in my STAG it was already.
3474701	B	upol foreign office needing papers	but she didn't have it.
3474702	B	annoying upol's need of tr	So, I was like "why?" you know, I put it everywhere I could, but she didn't get it. I was like: "OK..."
3474708	B	tip work more on communicating	so, maybe they should work more about that, yeah... but, you know, it wasn't, like,

			problem. it was just like funny that they didn't talk between each other.

Controlling employees

348497 5	E	tip: pressure on coord	I think that there should be more pressure on workers who are doing coordinators for students for Erasmus.