

Problems of Recognition In Making Erasmus from an academic perspective

Introduction

- Who am I?
 - 1998-2006: staff member at faculty of arts and philosophy, Ghent university
 - Responsibilities: QA and Internationalisation mainly incoming and outgoing Erasmus students
 - 2006-present: senior education advisor at Ghent University Association (consisting of Ghent University, University College Ghent, University College Arteveldehogeschool, University College West Flanders)
 - Responsibilities: QA and Internationalisation (policy-making)
 - ESN-contact at Association level

Problems of Recognition from an academic view

Home and host institution:

- Responsibility towards outgoing and incoming students (Erasmus University Charter)
- Signed bilateral agreements → binding
- Tools from the EC to support institutions in organising mobility for students (and more)
 - ⇒ Erasmus Student Charter
 - ⇒ ECTS: a.o.
 - ✓ Learning Agreement
 - ✓ Transcript of Records
 - ✓ ECTS-label/ DS label as 'trigger'

No excuses for failure

Problems of credits: LA

Learning agreement:

- Beforehand:
 - Signed and agreed before departure by the three responsible parties (95.8%)
 - Signed LA = Confirmation of full recognition, no matter difference in authority between who signs LA and who recognizes credits!
 - Not always possible due to e.g. lack of information of study programmes at host institution, language barriers, ...

Problems of credits: LA

- Upon arrival
 - Need for alterations in LA:
 - Cfr Prime report: changes in course schedules
 - language problems
 - level might be too low or too high...
 - Responsibility of the parties involved to rapidly respond...but this is a first 'trap':
 - Changes in programme at host institution
 - Need for new agreement of home institution
 - The student going crazy

- ⇒ Changing process should be realised within one month!

Problems of credits: LA

- Learning agreement is binding: confirmation LA = confirmation full recognition
- Home institution = one party (central + decentral)
Host institution = one party (central + decentral)
Student = one party

Problems of credits: full recognition

- (full) Recognition of ECTS-credits
 - Lack of trust between institutions
 - No trust = no bilateral agreement or partnership
 - Incompatibility of Study programmes:
 - Responsibility of institution: do not send students to partners who don't offer *compatible* study programmes
 - Intensive communication with outgoing/incoming students and partner institution before departure
 - Delusions of Grandeur
 - One on one relation at course level (content, # of credits,...): impact on choice and course credits
 - "*why study French in France? I teach a lot better French...*"

Problems of credits: full recognition

- Organisational issues and non-recognition of certain courses
 - Communication at all times re changes in curriculum, recognition of additional/elective/language courses
 - Responsibility of all three parties involved
 - Institutions must take their responsibility but also students have a charter!

Problems of grading upon return

- ECTS grading scale = drawback leading to:
 - 'own' conversion tables
 - ⇒ Arbitrary, not always scientific-based
 - ⇒ Disadvantage students
 - ⇒ In two ways cfr 'weak' versus 'strong' student
- Proposal for solution:
 - Adoption of ECTS-grade without conversion
 - Integration of ECTS-grade without conversion in the local Diploma Supplement

Learning Outcomes as buzz-word?

- Evolve from curriculum comparison → comparison of learning outcomes (competencies + level)
 - ⇒ No longer one on one relation regarding credits
 - ⇒ No longer one on one relation regarding content
 - ⇒ In line with EQF

But...mentality change from staff is needed

And...*Higher education institutions are given a high degree of autonomy in the EHEA* (cfr. Prime, p. 41)...until...?

What can ESN do?

- Stress the Erasmus basis principles:
 - No bilateral agreement → no Erasmus
 - No set courses → no Erasmus
- “Ambassadors” of the good practices:
 - Erasmus ≠ Tourism office
 - Advertise the good practices
- Set up a **blacklist**. no respect for EUC (or ESC), including no full academic recognition ⇔ on the list
- Keep putting this topic (and others) on the agenda

Hope for the future

- Screening of the partner institutions: no trust = no agreement
- Internationalisation at institutional level: finally integrated in the vision and mission of the HEI → responsibility
- Indicators for Internationalisation (IMPI, Bol.Experts)
- Promote the surplus value of mobility
 - Academic surplus value
 - Cultural surplus value
 - (often) Linguistic surplus value
- European Commission as an ally for all parties