

Erasmus+ Program Impact on Higher Education Change Management

Cristina Teodora Roman

Cristina Ionela Bulat

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania

throman@uaic.ro

bulat_cristina@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article investigates the impact of Erasmus+ programs on higher education institutions with the support of the employees working within the Erasmus+ program across European universities. Employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, the research explores participant roles, challenges, and recommendations. Key findings include challenges identified including bureaucratic hurdles and issues with student engagement. Recommendations emphasize digitalization and language proficiency enhancements. Despite limitations, this study provides valuable insights that can contribute to the improvement of Erasmus+ initiatives and institutional practices.

Key words: Erasmus+, higher education, change management, European Union

J.E.L. classification: A20, I23, M12

1. Introduction

In higher education, where tradition and innovation intersect (Mauduit & Gual Soler, 2020), the integration of transformative practices often encounters resistance from entrenched systems and conventional methods. Taking into consideration these challenges, the Erasmus+ program might be a beacon of change, fostering international collaboration and mobility between institutions across Europe and beyond. Although the program is primarily designed to promote academic exchange, its influence can extend beyond student mobility and cultural enrichment to the best practices exchange on different identified problems in higher education. This article aims to identify the impact of Erasmus+ mobilities on the landscape of change management in higher education.

2. Literature review

Change management plays a crucial role in facilitating successful transformations within higher education institutions. Although faced with challenges such as deadlocked processes and outdated systems, change management serves as a bridge to guide people through transitions and ensure that change is implemented smoothly, effectively and with positive outcomes. By emphasizing improved communication, a structured approach, stakeholder engagement and reducing disruption, change management acts as a compass that guides institutions through the maze of transformation, ultimately enabling them to navigate change and leverage it for growth and excellence. (Prosci, n.d.)

The Erasmus program, originally launched by the European Union in 1987 to promote cooperation between universities and higher education institutions across Europe, has evolved into a broader framework known as "Erasmus+". This expanded program includes various programs for transnational cooperation and mobility in the fields of education, training, youth and sport within Europe and beyond. Over the years, millions of people have participated in Erasmus+, including staff, students, young people and learners of all ages. Between 2014 and 2023, over 15 million people will participate (European Commission, n.d.).

The Erasmus+ Programme Guide comprises three main actions: (1) Key Action 1: Mobility Projects, Youth Participation, DiscoverEU, Staff Mobility in Sport and Virtual Exchanges. (2) Key Action 2: Partnerships for cooperation, excellence and innovation, capacity building and European sport events. (3) Key Action 3: European Youth Together and Jean Monnet Actions. Some actions are implemented through specific calls for proposals managed directly by the European Commission or the Executive Agency (European Commission, n.d.).

In its second phase, which runs from 2021 to 2027, the Erasmus+ program focuses on four key priorities. First, it aims to provide support for the green transition by aligning its initiatives with environmental sustainability objectives. Secondly, the program addresses the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation and ensures that participants are equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge. In addition, Erasmus+ focuses on social inclusion and diversity initiatives to create an environment that values differences and ensures equal opportunities for all. Finally, the program aims to strengthen democratic engagement and civic participation, empowering individuals to actively contribute to society and uphold shared values (European Commission, n.d.).

3. Research methodology

The methodology adopted for this research aimed to provide insides into various aspects related to Erasmus+ programs and their impact on higher education institutions. Through a structured approach, the research sought to meet the research objectives.

Research objectives:

- 1) Profile the individuals participating in Erasmus+ programs across higher education institutions.
- 2) Examine the diverse roles held by participants within the framework of Erasmus+ programs.
- 3) Identify the contributions and suggestions that could enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Erasmus+ programs.
- 4) Evaluate the influence of Erasmus+ programs on the development and improvement of higher education institutions.
- 5) Identify and explore the challenges encountered by individuals engaged in Erasmus+ activities.
- 6) Collect the recommendations aimed at enhancing institutional practices and procedures related to Erasmus+ programs.
- 7) Assess if the current resources and support are enough for the successful implementation of Erasmus+ program activities.
- 8) Investigate the levels of communication and engagement among participants involved in Erasmus+ programs.

Utilizing a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches, the survey had closed questions and open-ended questions, this methodology facilitated a thorough exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and suggestions. By employing diverse data sources and analytical tools, the research aimed to offer comprehensive insights that could inform future strategies and policies concerning Erasmus+ programs and their integration within higher education institutions.

The data was collected through an online survey distributed to employees involved in Erasmus+ programs in different higher education institutions from across Europe. The survey included questions on demographic information (age, gender, education level, HEI affiliation), role within Erasmus+ programs, the level of interaction between employees involved in the Erasmus+ and students, contributions to program improvement, challenges faced, suggestions for improvement, and perceptions of institutional support and resources.

4. Findings

The findings section of this article presents the analysis of various aspects related to Erasmus+ programs and their impact on higher education institutions. The research delved into demographics, participant roles, challenges faced, recommendations for improvement, and the overarching relationship between Erasmus+ initiatives and institutional enhancement efforts.

4.1. Demographic results

The research population comprises 69 employees actively participating in Erasmus+ programs at higher education institutions in different European countries. The demographic profile of the participants reflects a wide range of age, gender, educational background and institutional affiliation, providing a comprehensive perspective on the topic.

Table no. 1 Age distribution

Age	Number	Percentage
18-24 years old	0	0
25-34 years old	9	13,24
35-44 years old	26	38,24
45-55 years old	24	35,29
55 years or older	10	14,71
Prefer not to say	0	0

Source: Primary data gathered by authors

The majority of participants are between 35 and 44 years old and makeup 38.24% of the population. This suggests that people in this age group are actively participating in Erasmus+ programs.

The higher percentage of female participants (73.91%) compared to male participants (26.09%) may reflect general trends in the gender composition of staff in higher education institutions or the particular interest and commitment of women in international mobility initiatives.

Table no. 2 Educational Background

Studies	Number	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	9	13,04
Master's Degree	42	60,87
Ph.D. or higher	15	21,74
Prefer not to say	1	1,45
Other	2	2,90

Source: Primary data gathered by authors

The prevalence of participants with a Master's degree (60.87%) indicates a higher level of education among participants in Erasmus+ programs. This could indicate that people with advanced degrees are more likely to be involved in the internationalization efforts of their institutions.

Table no. 3 Institutional Affiliation

Country	Institution (as mentioned in questionnaire)	Answers
Netherlands	Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, Windesheim UAS, Zwolle, Saxion University of Applied Sciences	3
France	UCO, Université Catholique de l'Ouest, EM Normandie Business School, Université Grenoble Alpes, Grenoble Alpes University, University of Lille, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, University of La Rochelle, Lyon 1	14
Lithuania	Kauno kolegija	1
Poland	Bialystok University of Technology, Maritime University of Szczecin, University of Lodz, University of Maria Curie-Skłodowska, University of Bialystok, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Lazarski University, Humanitas University	9
Portugal	Maia University	1
Spain	University of La Laguna, Universidad Catolica de Valencia, University of Oviedo, University of Granada, Universitat de Girona, UCO Spain, UNIVERSITY OF OVIEDO, University of La Rochelle	9
Italy	Univerisy of Pavia, Università di Foggia, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, università della calabria, LA Sapienza, Roma, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro	8
Germany	Jade University, Hochschule Bremen, University of Wuerzburg	3

Croatia	Faculty of Economics and Business in Rijeka, University in Osijek, University of Rijeka (multiple mentions), University of Rijeka, Faculty of Civil Engineering, University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management Opatija, University Department of Professional studies, Split	10
Bulgaria	University of Veliko Tarnovo, D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics	2
Serbia	University of Kragujevac	1
Belgium	HEL	1
Greece	University of Macedonai	1
Latvia	ISMA University of Applied Sciences, Riga Technical University	2
Romania	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi	2
Finland	University of Turku	1

Source: Primary data gathered by authors

4.2. Role related to Erasmus+ programs

The distribution of participants across different countries and institutions illustrates the multinational nature of Erasmus+ programs and their impact on higher education worldwide.

Table no. 4 Position Related to Erasmus+ Programs

#	Position related to the Erasmus+ programs	No.
1	Head of Erasmus International Office	7
2	Erasmus+ Coordinator	25
3	Erasmus+ Officer	15
4	Outgoings Advisor	1
5	Mobility team leader	1
6	Programme director	1
7	Office work	1
8	Assistant Professor	2
9	Erasmus+ administrative coordinator	3
10	Vicedean for international relations	2
11	Manager Incoming Students	1
12	International projects manager	4
13	Student mobility manager	1
14	Erasmus Agreement Coordinator (Many Programs)	3
15	Mobility Assistant of a school	1
16	Referent for Incoming Students	1

Source: Primary data gathered by authors

The diversity of roles held by the participants underlines the interdisciplinary nature of Erasmus+ initiatives within higher education institutions. From administrative positions to academic positions, the variety of roles reflects the multi-faceted approach to managing international mobility programs.

Understanding the dynamics between staff and participants in Erasmus+ programs is crucial for assessing the effectiveness and impact of such initiatives on higher education institutions. This research looks at different aspects of Erasmus+ mobility experiences, including the role of staff in supporting students and professors during their participation.

Table no. 5 How close work the Erasmus+ employees to the students

	Number	Percentage
Very close	59	85,51
Moderately close	8	11,59
Minimally	2	2,90
Not at all	0	0,00

Source: Primary data gathered by authors

The majority of respondents (85.51%) stated that they work very closely with students and professors involved in Erasmus+ programs. This high level of engagement suggests that staff play an essential role in facilitating and supporting participants' mobility experiences. Close collaboration between staff and program participants is likely to increase the effectiveness of Erasmus+ initiatives by providing students and professors with the necessary guidance, support and resources during their mobility experience. These findings highlight the important role of staff in promoting successful Erasmus+ mobility experiences and in facilitating meaningful internationalization efforts in higher education institutions.

4.3. Contributions and suggestions

As institutions adapt to the changing higher education landscape, addressing the proactive role of staff in Erasmus+ programmes and wider university or faculty activities becomes necessary. By assessing whether staff have made suggestions to improve Erasmus+ activities specifically, wider university or faculty activities, or both, this research seeks to understand the extent of staff involvement in promoting improvements in their academic environment. Such findings can shed light on the extent of staff engagement and the potential impact of their contributions on programme effectiveness and overall institutional development.

Table no. 6 Employees implication in the change management process

	Number	Percentage
Yes, I made suggestions for both.	32	46,38
Yes, I have only made suggestions related to the Erasmus+ program activity.	8	11,59
Yes, I have only made suggestions to the general activity of my university/faculty.	7	10,14
No, I haven't made any suggestions at all	22	31,88

Source: Primary data gathered by authors

The results indicate a strong commitment among respondents (46.38%) to proposing improvements for both Erasmus+ program activities and general faculty functions, underscoring a holistic approach to staff involvement. A notable proportion (31.88%) did not offer suggestions. Some respondents focused solely on Erasmus+ activities (11.59%) or general faculty concerns (10.14%), showcasing diverse interests among staff.

Respondents have provided suggestions that could enhance various facets of Erasmus+ program activities and broader university or faculty initiatives. The suggestions put forth by respondents offer a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities within Erasmus+ programs and institutional frameworks. The suggestions provided are:

- ✚ **Promotion and Awareness:** Respondents emphasize the importance of promoting Erasmus+ opportunities across diverse stakeholder groups, from students to university leadership. Strategies include one-on-one meetings, information sessions, and the development of policy documents to ensure comprehensive awareness and understanding of available opportunities.
- ✚ **Simplification and Improvement of Procedures:** Efforts are directed toward simplifying administrative processes both within home institutions and at the national agency level. Suggestions focus on streamlining paperwork, easing enrolment procedures for Erasmus students, and enhancing the application process through improved databases and accessible information.
- ✚ **Coordination and Management:** Respondents highlight the need for better coordination to support both incoming and outgoing students. This involves organizing student management activities, welcome days, and ensuring smooth mobility experiences through close collaboration within Erasmus programs.
- ✚ **Quality Enhancement:** Suggestions aim to enhance the quality of Erasmus+ experiences through improved documentation speed, better preparation of information for students, and effective communication channels. Additionally, proposals target the refinement of selection processes for academic and administrative staff, internal Erasmus procedures, and workload

management.

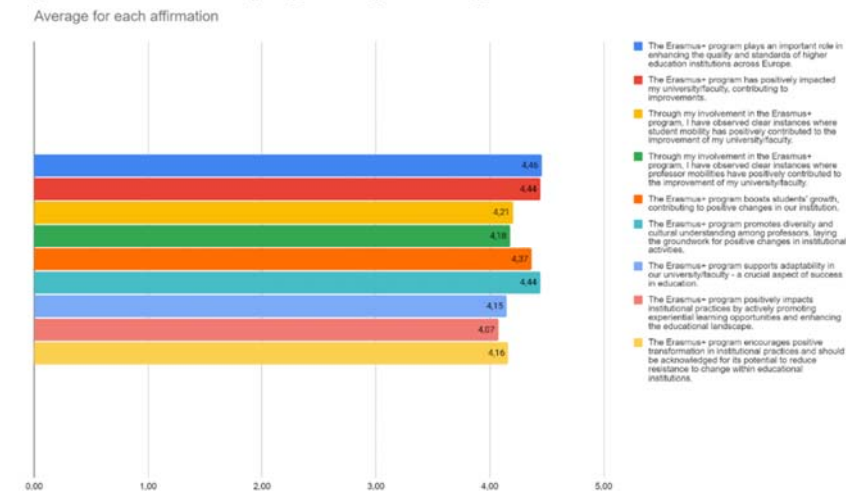
- ✚ **Partnerships and Networking:** Respondents actively seek to expand partnerships with new universities and companies to enrich the Erasmus+ experience. This includes participating in network development, creating new agreements, and facilitating mobility opportunities for students and teaching staff.
- ✚ **Innovation and Digitalization:** Embracing digital solutions is seen as pivotal for enhancing efficiency and accessibility. Suggestions include digitalizing processes such as application submissions, acceptance letters, and transcript exchanges to streamline operations and reduce paperwork.
- ✚ **Feedback and Advocacy:** Respondents advocate for better funding opportunities and procedural improvements within Erasmus programs. They actively engage in providing feedback to Erasmus offices, suggesting modifications to program structures, and advocating for changes to benefit both students and faculty.
- ✚ **Community Engagement:** Initiatives focus on engaging the wider community through events like International Week and expanding English-language course offerings to attract more international students and foster greater cultural exchange.

Overall, the suggested measures indicate the willingness to maximize the quality and outcome of the Erasmus+ program from a long-term perspective.

4.4. Erasmus+ program impact on higher education institutions

Respondents were asked to express their level of agreement with a series of statements, each highlighting different aspects of the program's influence on institutional quality, student and professor mobility, diversity promotion, adaptability, and transformative potential.

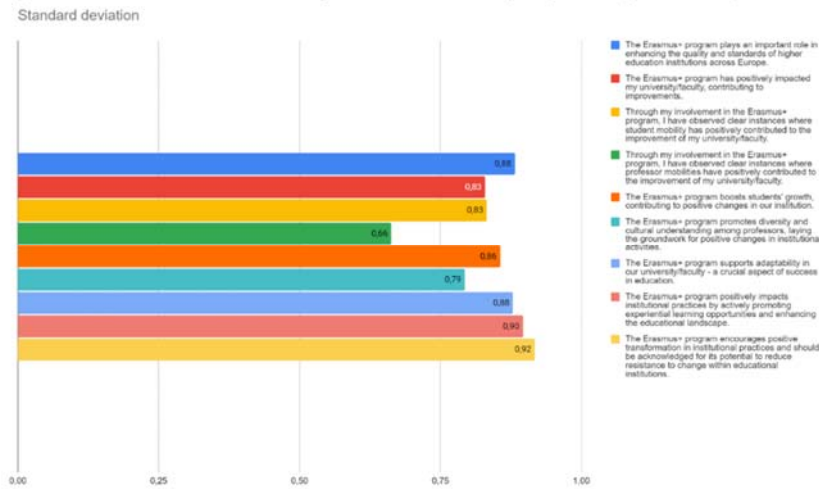
Figure no. 1 Erasmus+ program impact on higher education institutions



Source: Primary data gathered by authors

The average for each statement indicates a high agreement with the Erasmus+ program impacts higher education institutions in a positive way. Furthermore, the high average of all the statements shows that the Erasmus+ program is considered to be very beneficial overall, as it leads to positive changes within higher education institutions, promotes diversity and inclusion, and allows for transformative practices in education to take place.

Figure no. 2 Standard deviation for the Erasmus+ program impact on higher education institutions



Source: Primary data gathered by authors

The standard deviations across the statements generally indicate a consistent level of agreement among respondents regarding the positive impacts of the Erasmus+ program on higher education institutions. With standard deviations ranging from 0.66 to 0.92, there is relatively little variability in opinions among participants. This consistency suggests that respondents perceive the Erasmus+ program as playing a crucial role in enhancing the quality and standards of higher education institutions across Europe. They also believe that the program has significantly contributed to improvements within their own universities or faculties, both through student and professor mobilities. Furthermore, respondents agree that the Erasmus+ program fosters diversity and cultural understanding among professors, promoting positive changes in institutional activities. They also acknowledge its role in supporting adaptability within their institutions, which is seen as essential for success in education.

4.5. Challenges faced

The survey results provide valuable insights into the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by employees involved in Erasmus+ programs within higher education institutions. These findings are important because they offer a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of Erasmus+ initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and explore opportunities for enhancing the overall experience for students, professors, and staff participating in these programs. The majority of respondents have encountered challenges or obstacles in their work related to Erasmus+ programs. This suggests that various difficulties appear while Erasmus + program employees do their jobs. Understanding and addressing these challenges are crucial to increasing the effectiveness and impact of Erasmus+ programs in higher education. The respondents were asked to briefly describe the challenges or obstacles that they are facing and the results are as follows:

- ✚ **Challenges in Perception and Implementation:** The perception of Erasmus+ and internationalization as additional tasks rather than integral components of roles poses a significant challenge for many lecturers and staff. Implementation issues persist with new technological tools, compounded by the need to manage multiple budgets within universities. Increasing responsibilities accompany rising student participation rates, adding pressure to existing workflows. Digitalization remains a significant challenge, with issues ranging from difficulties in signing bilateral agreements to accommodation shortages for incoming students.
- ✚ **Student Engagement and Support:** Post-COVID, there has been a decline in student willingness to participate in semester/year abroad programs. Challenges such as low Erasmus grants and issues with online platforms hinder student and staff engagement. Ensuring students understand the academic rigour of Erasmus programs and addressing financial constraints for economically disadvantaged students are key challenges. Some view Erasmus+ mobility as a

summer leisure activity rather than an academic pursuit.

- ✚ **Administrative and Bureaucratic Challenges:** System malfunctions, unclear directives, and heavy bureaucracy hamper administrative efficiency. Inadequacies in platforms like MOVEON for Learning Agreements and ERASMUS Agreements compound administrative challenges. The proliferation of paperwork and lack of harmonization in procedures contribute to administrative burdens.
- ✚ **Inter-Institutional Coordination and Communication:** Incompatibility between systems across universities complicates coordination efforts. Welcoming Erasmus students requires meticulous planning due to organizational complexities and resource constraints. Evolving student attitudes towards personalized programs necessitate increasingly stringent regulations.
- ✚ **Language and Communication Challenges:** Linguistic differences and bureaucratic paperwork present significant hurdles. Issues with students' English proficiency and the functionality of Erasmus Without Paper impede communication. Technical challenges with the new EWP system require adaptation.
- ✚ **Policy and Regulatory Challenges:** Interpretation variations in Erasmus rules among National Agencies and administrative differences among partners contribute to regulatory complexities. Changes in program regulations, including grant rates and green travel policies, pose challenges for program management. The introduction of Erasmus Without Paper and new program regulations has impacted the program's image due to unrealistic requirements.
- ✚ **Community Engagement and Mindset Change:** Encouraging community involvement and fostering a positive mindset towards internationalization are ongoing challenges.
- ✚ **Information and Technology Challenges:** Issues with platforms like the Beneficiary Module and the need to stay updated with news present daily challenges.

4.6. Recommendations for Institutional Enhancement

The participants were asked if they shared their experiences and insights gained from their engagement with Erasmus+ programs by offering recommendations for institutional enhancement. Among respondents, 34.78% indicated having specific recommendations for overall institutional enhancement based on their experiences with Erasmus+ programs. This suggests a noteworthy subset of participants who have identified areas for improvement or innovation within their institutions, potentially drawing from insights gained through their involvement in Erasmus + initiatives. The diverse array of recommendations put forth by the respondents has the potential to inform strategic planning and decision-making processes within higher education institutions, facilitating continuous improvement and advancement. However, it's also notable that a significant portion (65.22%) did not provide specific recommendations, indicating a potential gap in institutional feedback mechanisms or varying levels of engagement with the Erasmus+ program among respondents. The recommendations made by respondents are the following:

- ✚ **Digitalization and Administrative Streamlining:** Implement comprehensive digitalization measures to minimize paperwork and streamline processes, including interinstitutional agreements, learning agreements, teaching agreements, and transcripts of records. Simplify procedures to facilitate smoother operations and enhance efficiency within Erasmus+ programs.
- ✚ **Language and Communication Enhancement:** Encourage language learning, particularly English, among students and staff. Increase the availability of courses taught in English and ensure a greater number of teaching staff are proficient in languages beyond their mother tongue.
- ✚ **Policy and Regulatory Refinement:** Ensure that universities honour all subjects agreed upon in Learning Agreements, with flexibility in subject selection to accommodate diverse student needs. Advocate for harmonization of measures and procedures across institutions to streamline administrative processes and facilitate student exchanges.
- ✚ **Community Engagement and Cultural Shift:** Foster a culture of internationalization within the entire academic community, promoting awareness and engagement with Erasmus+ programs. Encourage faculty participation in Erasmus+ initiatives to enrich the academic experience and promote global perspectives.

- ✚ **Financial Support and Accessibility:** Revise financial support mechanisms to consider students' financial situations in addition to the cost of living in host countries. Simplify administrative procedures and prioritize student accessibility to Erasmus+ mobility opportunities, ensuring equitable access for all students.
- ✚ **Inter-Institutional Collaboration and Communication:** Explore alternative platforms for administering Learning Agreements and facilitating institutional collaborations. Foster holistic cooperation across various units within institutions to ensure comprehensive support for Erasmus+ programs and initiatives.

4.7. Impact of resources and support

To find out if there is a special need for something in the day-to-day activity respondents were asked if they think specific support or resources could enhance the positive impact of the Erasmus+ program on your institution's improvement efforts. A notable divide exists regarding the perceived need for additional support or resources to amplify the positive impact of the Erasmus+ program on institutional improvement endeavours. While a significant portion (50.72%) advocates for the need for specific resources or support to augment the program's efficacy, a slightly smaller cohort (49.28%) maintains that such support or resources may not be necessary. This dichotomy underscores the complexity of optimizing the Erasmus+ program's influence within educational institutions and highlights the importance of tailored approaches to address diverse institutional needs and priorities. The respondents were also asked to briefly describe the support or resources that could enhance the positive impact of the Erasmus+ program over the institution's improvement efforts, and the results are:

- ✚ **Improving Digitalization and Systems:** Enhancing accessibility through improved digitalization processes, particularly via Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) and institutional systems, to streamline Erasmus+ operations for students and staff. Establishing a centralized database of national grade conversion systems to facilitate easy access for universities, aiding in the development of standardized grade conversion protocols for students abroad. Advocating for larger scholarships to alleviate financial constraints and make Erasmus programs more financially viable for participants. Suggesting the introduction of regulations at the ministry level to elevate the status of ERASMUS projects and exchanges to the same level as scientific projects. Calling for additional resources and personnel to manage Erasmus+ activities effectively, including dedicated Erasmus coordinators at department and faculty levels.
- ✚ **Involvement of Stakeholders and Authorities:** Emphasizing the need for increased involvement and commitment from professors, teachers, department directors, and administrative staff to drive the success of Erasmus+ initiatives. Seeking support from governmental bodies, boards, deans, students, and administrative personnel to bolster the Erasmus program's impact and reach.
- ✚ **Challenges with Current Systems and Processes:** Identifying challenges such as limited budgets, complex administrative procedures, and curricular disparities, which hinder the smooth functioning of Erasmus+ activities. Urging the European Commission to enforce stricter digitalization measures on universities to overcome reluctance and expedite the transition to digital systems. Highlighting the need for simplified work procedures, merit-based beneficiary selection, and language proficiency enhancements among teaching staff.
- ✚ **Calls for Improvement and Action:** Expressing a widespread sentiment among respondents regarding the need for specific support and resources to enhance the positive impact of the Erasmus+ program. Advocating for the creation of an Erasmus transcript to standardize evaluation systems across universities and streamline academic credit transfers. Acknowledging the challenges faced in daily professional life and emphasizing the importance of administrative support and recognition in driving improvements within the Erasmus+ framework.

4.8. Communication and engagement

To explore the extent to which participants have refrained from sharing improvement ideas with their university or faculty within the context of their experiences with the Erasmus+ program we asked the respondents if they ever avoided sharing ideas of improvement with their university or faculty, from their experience because you thought nobody would pay attention or listen. The responses reveal varied attitudes towards sharing improvement ideas within institutional settings. The majority of participants (71.01%) indicated that they have not avoided sharing improvement ideas, suggesting a generally positive environment within their university or faculty for idea exchange and collaboration. This finding underscores a culture of receptivity to diverse perspectives and suggestions for enhancing educational experiences. Approximately a quarter of respondents (26.09%) admitted to avoiding sharing improvement ideas because they believed their suggestions would go unnoticed or receive little attention from their university or faculty. This sentiment reflects a potential gap in communication channels or a lack of responsiveness within institutional structures.

Participants were also invited to share additional insights regarding their engagement within the Erasmus+ program within institutions. The responses encompass a range of themes and sentiments, providing valuable insights into various aspects of the Erasmus+ program and its impact on institutional improvement:

- ✚ **Perceptions of Bureaucracy and Institutional Processes:** Some respondents highlighted challenges related to bureaucratic processes within national and EU institutions, expressing a desire for more streamlined procedures and direct support channels. Additionally, there were suggestions to reframe the perception of Erasmus+ as a means to enhance international visibility and attract tuition-paying international students.
- ✚ **Personal Commitment and Involvement:** Several participants expressed a strong personal commitment to fostering international collaboration and integrating Erasmus+ outcomes into the educational process of their universities. They emphasized the transformative value of Erasmus+ experiences for personal and professional growth, underscoring its importance for all students.
- ✚ **Desired Improvements and Suggestions:** Recommendations for enhancing the Erasmus+ program included advocating for European University alliances to facilitate institutional changes, advocating for dedicated staffing and support resources within departments or faculties, and the creation of accessible information hotlines for direct assistance and guidance.
- ✚ **General Comments and Feedback:** Respondents emphasized the significance of the Erasmus+ program in promoting European integration, fostering a sense of European citizenship, and contributing to the collective advancement of higher education. Some expressed eagerness to contribute further to the program and congratulated its ongoing efforts.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the research findings provide valuable insights into the demographic characteristics, roles, contributions, challenges, and recommendations related to Erasmus+ programs within higher education institutions. The demographic analysis reveals a diverse participant base in terms of age, gender, educational background, and institutional affiliation, highlighting the inclusive nature of Erasmus+ programs and their appeal across various segments of the academic community. Participants hold diverse roles within Erasmus+ initiatives, underscoring the interdisciplinary nature of these programs and the collaborative efforts required for their successful implementation 85,51% of them working very closely with the Erasmus students. The contributions and suggestions provided by participants demonstrate their proactive engagement and commitment to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of Erasmus+ programs, with recommendations ranging from digitalization and administrative streamlining to community engagement and cultural shift. Despite the positive impact of Erasmus+ programs on institutional development, student and professor mobility, diversity promotion, and transformative potential, respondents also face various challenges. These include bureaucratic hurdles, administrative complexities, communication barriers, and issues with student engagement and support. To address these challenges and enhance institutional practices, respondents offer a range of recommendations, including digitalization of processes, language and communication enhancement, policy and regulatory refinement, community

engagement, financial support and accessibility, inter-institutional collaboration, and resource allocation. While the majority of respondents express a positive environment for idea exchange and collaboration within their institutions, some acknowledge challenges related to bureaucracy and institutional processes, personal commitment and involvement, and desired improvements.

Overall, the research findings underscore the importance of continuous improvement and innovation within Erasmus+ programs and higher education institutions to maximize their impact on student and staff mobility, institutional development, and European integration. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the recommended enhancements, institutions can further enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Erasmus+ initiatives, fostering a more inclusive, collaborative, and transformative educational environment.

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