

## Students' attitude towards international mobility programmes

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### Abstract

*This paper presents an overview of international mobility programmes for students at Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania. International exchanges are an increasingly sought-after tool by higher education institutions in order to implement internationalization strategies. Considering the number of international exchanges that increases from one year to the next, universities should adopt the best policies to further support this trend by promoting mobilities and stimulating students to access them. The case study will follow, among others, the reasons why students would access a study or internship scholarship, the limits that constrain them to take this step, as well as the identification of the most suitable destinations for such mobility. By analyzing behavioral intentions, university representatives can be confident that the number of mobilities that can be carried out in the coming years will be increasing.*

**Keywords:** higher education institutions, international exchanges, internationalization, mobility programmes, students

### Introduction

The higher education system has recently benefited from many changes that have contributed to its development throughout the world. An important factor that determined this evolution is represented by the internationalization process (Egron-Polak, 2012).

Throughout history, when the internationalization process was discussed among higher education institutions, the relationship between these organizations was highlighted in several directions: 'student and staff exchange'; 'working together in aid/development projects'; 'shared and joint research and scholarship' (OECD, 2019). Depending on the institutional size that certain universities have, the previously mentioned directions, taken individually, have a lower or higher priority in their internationalization strategies (Egron-Polak and Hudson, 2012).

However, international mobility programmes are a tool that universities around the world are increasingly using. Choudaha (2017) found that, in recent years, international students have accessed

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at least three waves of opportunities, each driven by a specific motivation: financial support (Wave I: 1999-2006), academic support (Wave II: 2006-2013), and career support (Wave III: 2013-2020). This study confirms that student needs are constantly evolving, influenced by the changing geopolitical and economic context.

One of the most popular programmes of this type is Erasmus Plus, “the European Union Programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the 2021-2027 period” (European Commission, 2024a). It not only facilitated the exchange of people from one country to another, but had two major contributions that still have effects today: it was an important factor for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to join the European Union, as well as for other states that aspired to this status; managed the implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), through its initiation within international exchanges (de Wit and Altbach, 2020).

In the period 1987-2023, over 15.1 million beneficiaries accessed a learning mobility financed by the Erasmus Plus Programme, the interest increasing from one year to the next (European Commission, 2024b). Depending on the sector referred to, the programme supports the participation of several categories of people in such exchanges: ‘students’, ‘pupils’, ‘teachers’, ‘trainers’, ‘young people’, ‘youth workers’, ‘volunteers’, ‘athletes’, ‘coaches’ and others (European Commission, 2024a).

As previously mentioned, the fields of education and training are some of the sectors supported by the European Commission through the Erasmus Plus Programme. According to the latest data published on official channels, in 2023, the last reference year, these areas benefited from the largest budget distributed by the European Commission, of approximately 74% of the total value for that period (European Commission, 2024b). The Education and Training category includes the following sectors: ‘Higher Education’, ‘Vocational Education and Training’, ‘School Education’, ‘Adult Learning’ and ‘Cross-sectorial’ (European Commission, 2024b).

In the field of Higher Education, the promotion of international mobility can be a priority, due to the benefits that both the participants and the institutions involved can obtain (Turnea *et al.*, 2022). A university that supports such opportunities could benefit, among other things, from a development of cooperation and collaboration with organizations abroad (Diem *et al.*, 2023). This can serve for better external visibility, better positioning in international rankings and, of course, it can facilitate obtaining funds for the consolidation and development of activities from internationalization and research strategies, but not only. On the other hand, participants in these international exchanges have the opportunity to enrich their academic knowledge and acquire a mutually beneficial learning experience (Turnea *et al.*, 2022).

Considering the aspects presented, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the perception that students have regarding international mobility programmes. For this, a research will be carried out among the students of a university in Romania. The tool used will be a questionnaire distributed online. The results obtained will allow the analyzed university to propose different measures to stimulate students' interest in accessing international study or practice mobility in the coming years.

## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1. The Erasmus Plus Programme: a brief history

Currently known as the Erasmus Plus programme, it represents one of the most significant achievements of the European Union. It was launched in 1987 with the Council's decision to adopt the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) (Official Journal of the European Communities, 1987). The programme demonstrates the European Union's dedication to promoting a united, diverse, and knowledge-based Europe (Pinari, 2024).

At its inception, the programme included only eleven countries: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom (Hubble *et al.*, 2021). Over time, with the expansion of the European Union (EU), the number of participating countries has increased significantly. Currently, 33 countries participate with full rights, including EU member states and several third countries associated to the programme: Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, and Türkiye (European Commission, 2024a). In addition, the Erasmus Plus Guidelines specify a category of third countries not associated to the programme, which can participate in certain actions but not with full rights (European Commission, 2024a).

Romania is one of the 33 countries that can be fully involved in all actions carried out under the auspices of the Erasmus Plus Programme (European Commission, 2024a). This status is due to the fact that it is one of the member countries of the European Union. In 2023, the last reference year in the European Commission's statistics, over 1,270 mobility projects were implemented in Romania in all fields (European Commission, 2024c). Of these, the higher education sector benefited from the largest funding, totalling EUR 52,610,090 (European Commission, 2024c). This reflects the increased interest of universities in attracting funds for the implementation of mobility projects financed by the Erasmus Plus Programme.

To date, a total of 246,517 people have visited Romania through an Erasmus Plus mobility, with Türkiye and Italy among the most popular sending countries (European Commission, 2024d).

Regarding outgoing mobilities, 381,194 individuals have benefited from Erasmus Plus scholarships abroad, with Spain, Italy, and Portugal being among the most popular receiving countries (European Commission, 2024d). These figures are expected to change as beneficiaries complete their ongoing or planned mobilities.

A university in Romania that has implemented such projects is the Ovidius University of Constanta. Over time, international exchanges have supported the higher education institution in order to implement the internationalization strategy. Also, the results obtained in these mobility projects, together with other corresponding activities in the field of internationalization, can bring Ovidius University of Constanta a strengthening of its reputation and the possibility of offering educational services adapted to the new requirements of the global economy and society (Jugănar and Drugă, 2022).

Based on the institution's internal records, during the academic year 2022-2023, Ovidius University of Constanta facilitated 118 outgoing mobilities, for study or internships, conducted in European Union member states and third countries associated with the programme (Ovidius University of Constanta, 2024). In the same period, the university hosted 59 incoming students from the same category of states and one student from a third country not associated with the programme for study or internship mobilities in Constanta (Ovidius University of Constanta, 2024). These figures highlight significant progress achieved by the programme implementation team. For instance, in the academic year 2013-2014, only 39 outgoing and 29 incoming mobilities for study were recorded, and these were limited to programme countries at the time (Ovidius University of Constanta, 2020).

Observing this constant evolution of both the countries that are part of the Erasmus Plus Programme and the increasing number of mobilities carried out year after year, the responsible institutions should also analyze the needs of the beneficiaries. In this way, taking into account the current geopolitical context, they can better tailor the programmes to meet students' expectations. Ensuring that students' satisfaction is prioritized and addressing their specific needs will likely lead to a more positive attitude toward these opportunities. Over time, this could transform these scholarships into a necessity for students, reinforcing the significance of international mobility as a core element of their academic and personal growth.

## **1.2. Determinants of Erasmus Plus Programme Mobilities for Students**

According to a study, students who are beneficiaries of international mobility are considered those persons who “have crossed a national border to study or to undertake other study related

activities, for at least a certain unit of a study programme or a certain period of time, in the country to which they have moved” (Kelo *et al.*, 2006). From this point of view, we can highlight at least three conditions that such a student should meet: moving to another country; the purpose of the trip must be closely related to the learning activity or related to it; the period spent in the host country should be limited.

Depending on their own interests, students from a university can apply through the Erasmus Plus Programme for mobility, in physical format, for study or internship, with a duration of between two and twelve months, for bachelor's and master's study cycles, excluding travel days (European Commission, 2024a). Since there are cases where, for various reasons, the duration of the period prevents students from benefiting from such mobility, the programme can also offer them the chance to apply for a blended mobility, which necessarily contains a virtual component, and which can be between five and thirty days (European Commission, 2024a). Doctoral students are eligible to apply for both periods for a mobility held in physical format (European Commission, 2024a).

According to a study carried out by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), a non-profit international student organisation, and published in 2022, among the main motivations of students to benefit from an Erasmus Plus mobility can be included: „meeting new people”; „experiencing different learning environments”; „living abroad” (Erasmus Student Network, 2022). These factors can subsequently determine the final settlement of students in the host country, either to continue their studies or to find a job according to their needs. It is well known that, in addition to their educational impact, Erasmus Plus scholarships also contribute to the economic development of the host country. Upon completing their mobility, beneficiaries often express a desire to remain in the country where they studied to pursue employment opportunities. Familiar with the local environment and academically well-prepared, they contribute to the strengthening of an integrated European labor market (Parey and Waldinger, 2010). Additionally, if they become ambassadors after completing their mobility, students can promote the host country and city to their family and friends, encouraging them to visit as tourists or apply for an Erasmus Plus scholarship in the same destination, thereby helping to increase the number of international students (Amaro *et al.*, 2019).

Another factor that would determine the intention of students to apply for an Erasmus Plus mobility can be represented by the superior quality of the educational services offered by an institution abroad, which can thus contribute to the professional and personal development of the candidate (Granato *et al.*, 2024). In order to choose the right university, students have the opportunity to consult the list of inter-institutional agreements that the organization they belong to has concluded with other institutions in other states. Other tools they can use are represented by international

rankings. These can provide an overview of the educational act carried out at the universities that are present there. Among these rankings, we can list: Academic Ranking of World Universities (ShanghaiRanking Consultancy, 2024); QS World University Rankings (QS Quacquarelli Symonds, 2024); THE World University Rankings (Times Higher Education, 2024).

Once the decision to apply for an Erasmus Plus mobility is made, students will have to step out of their comfort zone and carry out certain preliminary activities, in order to prepare their experience abroad as best as possible. In addition to the part of getting the scholarship and the acceptance of the host university, students should pay special attention to the language preparation, resource management and the adjustment period to the new culture, the new different educational context and the new student body (Granato *et al.*, 2024).

Erasmus Plus mobilities can represent opportunities even for local students, who could interact with international ones. Each incoming student experience differs greatly from one to another. In addition to the academic part, there are other aspects that can decisively influence the time spent at the university abroad, such as: ‘social integration’, ‘friendship development’, ‘personal educational differences’, ‘different communication styles and customs’, ‘help seeking approaches’, ‘funding issues’, ‘career choices’, and other ‘soft skills’ (Bista, 2019). Thus, the involvement of local students, either individually or as ambassadors or volunteers in various associations such as ESN (Erasmus Student Network, 2024), could support the integration of incoming students in the host country. On the other hand, this involvement of local students will be able to develop certain soft skills and generate their interest to apply for a future study or practice mobility.

At the same time, local students and ESN association volunteers can be a real support in promoting study and practice opportunities among other university colleagues. In their efforts to stimulate students’ interest in applying for a scholarship abroad, universities, even through their volunteers, can also target candidates with limited opportunities who, in some cases, are less likely to benefit (Granato and Schnepf, 2024). Recently, the Erasmus Plus Programme even offers additional grants for those people with fewer opportunities, with special needs or for those from different regions who face certain challenges due to localization (European Commission, 2024a). These types of support make the programme much more inclusive, aiming to offer this opportunity to a wider range of students, not just those with parents who have higher education or above-average incomes, as may have been the case in the past (Kratz and Netz, 2016; Di Pietro, 2015).

All the efforts of the aforementioned students could be rewarded by additional points in the selection process, if they decide to apply for international mobility. There are universities that have in their evaluation grid a criterion for the volunteering activities carried out by the candidates. Thus,

students who have been involved either in supporting incoming Erasmus students, promoted international mobility to other colleagues or carried out various volunteer activities, receive additional points from the selection committee (Ovidius University of Constanta, 2022).

In addition to all the positive things mentioned, international mobilities could even be seen as threats to the quality of higher education. In a controversial way, these exchanges can be defined as: 'commercialization of trans-national higher education'; 'brain drain'; 'flooding by foreign students' (Rivza and Teichler, 2007). Such attributes only lead to the risk of lowering the reputation of international mobility programmes. In this case, the universities involved should always promote the benefits of these opportunities, the career prospects of students, as well as the economic advantages that cities and countries where such international exchanges take place can benefit from.

Analyzing the presented information, Erasmus Plus mobilities can be regarded as a key tool supporting both internationalization at home and abroad. They play a significant role in implementing university strategies, serving as a valuable resource for fostering students' academic and professional development while upholding the core values of higher education (Roman and Bulat, 2023).

## 2. Research methodology

The main purpose of this research is to analyze the attitude of students at Ovidius University in Constanta, Romania, regarding international mobility programmes. We have formulated no less than three objectives that can support us in this endeavor:

O1: to identify the degree of knowledge of international mobility opportunities;

O2: to identify the geographical regions that show a high interest for the development of international mobility;

O3: to identify the behavioral intentions of students regarding international mobility.

To achieve these objectives, we conducted a mixed-methods study based on a questionnaire. The tool used contained both closed questions, with simple or multiple answers, but also questions with open answers or that required the use of a semantic differential scale or a 7-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire was distributed between June and November 2024, online, through the university's social networks and by sending emails to student databases. The collected data were processed and analyzed using the SPSS Statistics software, version 30.

A total of 229 students provided responses. Details of their demographic profile are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Sample structure**

Variable	Biological gender				Marital status			
	Male	Female	Married	Single	<i>In a relationship</i>	Bachelor	Divorced	Widower
%	20.5%	79.5%	12.6%	55%	26.2%	4.4%	1.4%	0.4%
Variable	Age							
	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	over 65 years		
%	74.2%	14%	7%	2.6%	1.8%	0.4%		
Variable	Average monthly net income (RON)							
	<= 2,300	2,301-3,000	3,001-4,000	4,001-5,000	over 5,000	no income		
%	21.4%	10%	7%	6.1%	10.5%	45%		

Source: own processing based on data collected

As we can see in the previous table, most people who participated in the research are female (79.5%). Regarding the age of the respondents, most of them are between 18-24 years old (74.2%). Regarding marital status, 55% of the students who answered the questionnaire are single. Finally, when discussing their average monthly net income, 45% of them have no income.

Regarding their studies at the time of completing the questionnaire, most respondents were enrolled in a bachelor's degree programme (84.3%), followed by those in a master's degree programme (14.4%) and a doctoral study programme (1.3%).

If the form of education is discussed, 97% of the students were in full-time education, 1.7% of them in part-time education, and 1.3% were enrolled in a study programme in the form of distance education.

Last but not least, regarding the form of study financing, 47.2% of the students were following a study programme in the form of education without fees, 37.1% in the form of education with fees, 12.7% were in the form of education without fees and with a scholarship, and the remaining 3% were enrolled in the form of education with fees, but with a scholarship.

Next, the answers collected from the students of the Ovidius University of Constanta will be analyzed and discussed, closely related to the objectives of this research.

### 3. Findings and discussion

A first thematic question addressed to the students of the Ovidius University of Constanta referred to their degree of familiarity with the international mobility opportunities available at the institution to which they belong. A 7-point scale ranging from 1 (very unfamiliar) to 7 (very familiar) was used to answer this question. Descriptive data for this question can be found in Table 2.



**Table 2 - Degree of familiarity with international mobility opportunities**

Item	N	Min.	Max.	Mean
Degree of familiarity with international mobility opportunities	229	1	7	4.17

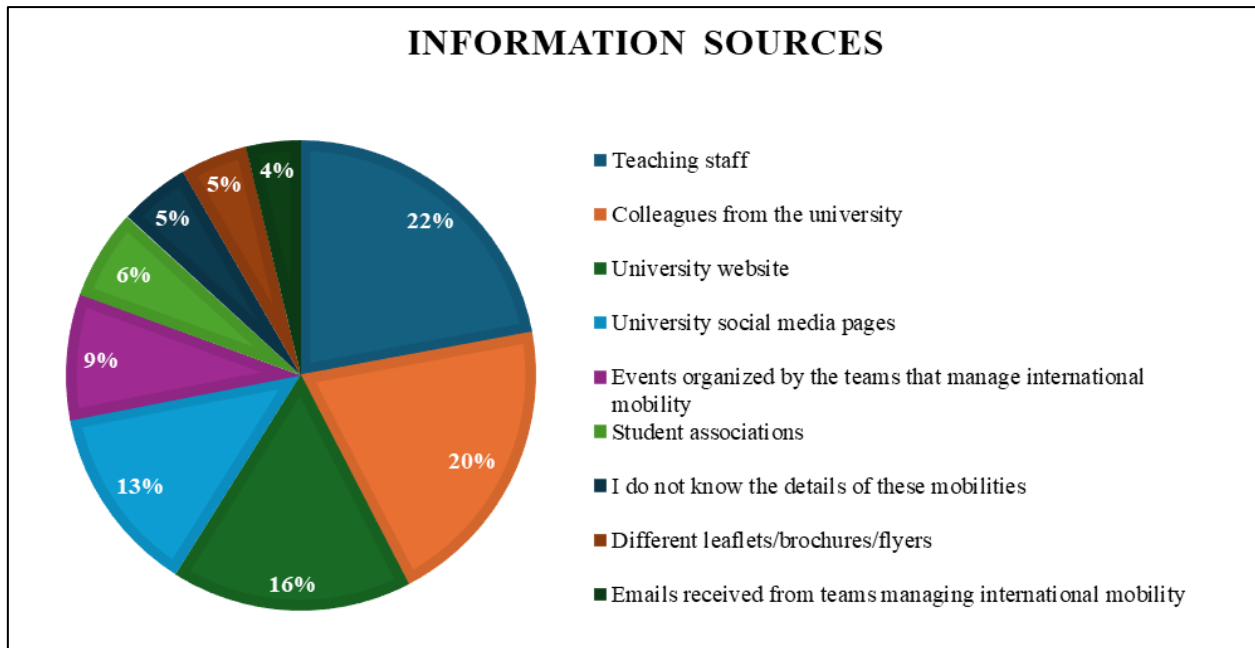
Source: own processing based on data collected

According to the results obtained ( $M = 4.17$ ), we can consider that several students know some information about these opportunities that they can take advantage of during their studies. However, some respondents are less familiar with them. For this, the teams that manage them should intensify their promotion activities. However, a significant part of the respondents is in their first year of undergraduate studies, and thus, at the time of the research, they have not yet had the opportunity to be introduced to these mobility programmes. Only 10.9% of the students who participated in the research managed to benefit, until now, from international mobility. Of these, 41% benefited from study mobilities, 26% benefited from practice mobilities, 21% benefited from both study and practice mobilities, and 12% participated in various cultural exchanges.

Among all international mobility opportunities, the most popular among students of Ovidius University of Constanta are those carried out through the Erasmus Plus Programme (95.2%). Other scholarships mentioned by students were: DAAD scholarships (2.3%); Fulbright scholarships (1.7%); CEEPUS scholarships (0.4%). The popularity of the Erasmus Plus Programme can be explained by the number of countries in which international exchanges can be carried out, compared to the other programmes that offer more limited opportunities from this point of view. 0.4% of respondents do not know of any opportunity for international mobility offered by the institution where they study.

Analyzing the results in Figure 1, it seems that the most popular sources of information from which students learned details about these international mobility opportunities are: teaching staff (22%), colleagues from the university (20%), the university website (16%), and the university social media pages (13%). The high percentages for these sources of information can be represented by the frequency with which they encounter or use them. Since we are talking about a very high proportion of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 (74.2%), people responsible for promoting international mobility programmes should take this into account and adapt their marketing strategies and policies depending on the profile of the students. Of the total respondents, 5% answered that they do not know details about these mobilities.

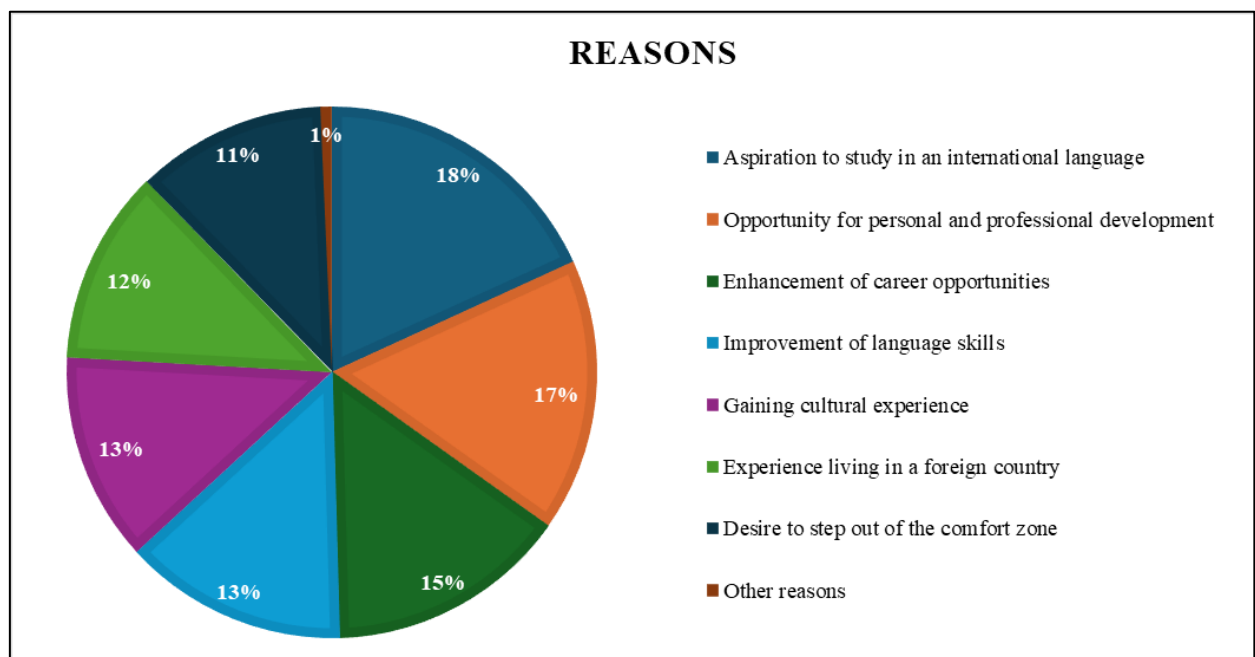
**Figure 1. Sources of information about international mobility**



Source: own processing based on data collected.

The main reasons why beneficiary students applied for international mobility, or why other students would be interested in applying for such a scholarship, are presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Reasons to access international mobility**



Source: own processing based on data collected.

As we can see, the main reasons that led or may lead Ovidius University of Constanta students to apply for international mobility are: aspiration to study in an international language (18%), opportunity for personal and professional development (17%), enhancement of career opportunities (15%). Since many students do not have the opportunity to study abroad full-time, an Erasmus Plus grant for a fixed period offers a viable alternative. This allows students to gain not only theoretical knowledge but also develop new soft skills, which may be among the most valuable benefits of such a programme.

These reasons align with four key dimensions of the Erasmus Plus experience: academic, social, cultural, and personal/psychological development (Gallarza *et al.*, 2024). Even if not explicitly mentioned, such an experience could also help develop entrepreneurial skills, including financial literacy, teamwork, idea capitalization, self-awareness, and others (Grosu *et al.*, 2024).

The following table shows some barriers that students believe they may encounter or have encountered when applying for international mobility.

**Table 3. Barriers encountered when applying for international mobility**

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>%</b>
Lack of necessary information / Insufficient promotion of opportunities	13%
Fear that subjects studied abroad will not be considered equivalent or recognized	10%
No barriers	10%
Fear of getting low grades at the university abroad	9%
Family responsibilities	8%
Fear of leaving the comfort zone	7%
Difficulties finding suitable accommodation	7%
Insufficient knowledge of an international language	6%
Fear of not adapting to the new culture	6%
Perceived value of the grants offered	6%
Job-related commitments	5%
The university's mobility offer	4%
Incompatibility of study programmes	4%
Interaction with the international mobility team	2%
Previous student experiences	2%
Other reasons	1%

Source: own processing based on data collected

As can be seen in the previous table, the biggest challenges students face when applying for international mobility are related to their limited knowledge about these opportunities (13%) and the fear that the subjects they study abroad may not be recognized or credited (10%). Less frequent challenges include concerns about previous experiences of other students (2%), interaction with the international mobility team (2%), and other minor reasons (1%). To address these barriers, university

teams should focus on providing solutions through their promotion of international mobility. One option could be to invite former beneficiaries to share their experiences and explain how they overcame any obstacles. In addition, the university could play a direct role in addressing some of these barriers by clearly communicating the principles promoted by the Erasmus Plus Programme through its Charter, for example (European Commission, 2020).

In addition to the barriers encountered, students were asked to mention several recommendations that they consider useful in order to increase the number of students who could access international mobility. The results are presented in Table 4. The top recommendations made by students were as follows: enhanced promotion of international mobility opportunities provided by the university (12%), offering larger grants (11%), developing an online platform for application submissions (11%), providing support courses to improve language skills (11%), and assisting students with finding accommodation in the host country (11%). By improving these aspects, the university could significantly increase the number of students applying for international mobility. Where feasible, the university should implement these recommendations or share them with relevant stakeholders, such as ministries, agencies, and commissions, in their annual reports. By doing so, the university can enhance educational outcomes, better prepare students for success in a rapidly evolving world, and foster global citizenship (Kitiashvili, 2024).

**Table 4. Recommendations for increasing the degree of access to international mobility opportunities**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>%</b>
Enhanced promotion of international mobility opportunities provided by the university	12%
Offering larger grants	11%
Developing an online platform for application submissions	11%
Offering support courses to improve language skills	11%
Providing support for finding suitable accommodation	11%
Providing informative materials in faculty halls	10%
Providing counseling services pre- and post- mobility	9%
Establishing inter-institutional agreements with prestigious universities globally	8%
Increased support from the international mobility team	7%
Creating an alumni network for international mobility participants	7%
Other recommendations	1.5%
No recommendations	1.5%

Source: own processing based on data collected

Regarding the ideal period that an international mobility should have, 32% of students prefer a period of one semester for their international mobility, followed by 26.2% who prefer a duration of 16-30 days, 13.8% who opt for two months, 12% who favor two semesters, 10.7% who choose 8-15

days, and 5.3% who would prefer a mobility period of 3-7 days. It is an advantage that the Erasmus Plus Programme offers both short-term scholarships (5 to 30 days) and long-term scholarships (2 to 12 months), aligning with students' varied preferences for mobility durations.

When discussing the geographical regions that would be of interest for future international mobility, 72% of students selected Europe as their preferred destination. Other responses included North America (12.6%), Asia (7.7%), South America (3.6%), Africa (2.3%), and Australia (1.8%). This preference for Europe may be influenced not only by the extensive opportunities provided through the Erasmus Plus Programme but also by factors such as the proximity to students' home countries, similar eating habits, favorable climate, and shared social values and norms. Additionally, Europe's cultural and historical connections with many countries, as well as its diversity in lifestyle and academic offerings, make it a popular destination for mobility.

Finally, the last set of questions aimed to analyze students' behavioral intentions regarding the international mobility opportunities offered by Ovidius University of Constanta. To assess these intentions, a 7-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The results are presented in Table 5

**Table 5. Analysis of behavioral intentions regarding international mobility opportunities**

Item	N	Min.	Max.	Mean
In the future, I intend to apply for an international mobility programme.	229	1	7	4.65
In the future, I intend to recommend other students to apply for an international mobility programme.	229	1	7	5.15

Source: own processing based on data collected

According to the results obtained in the previous table, students' behavioral intentions regarding international mobility opportunities appear to be positive. When asked about participating in an international mobility programme in the future, students generally expressed agreement with the idea (M = 4.65). A study by Granato *et al.* (2024) found that students in their early years are particularly motivated to take advantage of mobility opportunities. Perhaps more intensive promotion, along with participation in counseling sessions, could further boost their confidence, helping them become more determined to apply.

Additionally, whether or not they choose to participate, students expressed their willingness to recommend others to apply for an international mobility programme (M = 5.15). This could have two advantages. Firstly, by participating in promotional events, students would be open to sharing the information they have learned with their peers. Secondly, even if some students are not yet ready to

embark on mobility, they could still become volunteers with student associations supporting such exchanges, contributing to the promotion of these opportunities.

## Conclusions

This paper analyzed the attitudes of students regarding international mobility opportunities, with a particular focus on those from Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania.

Although international mobility programmes offer various benefits, potential beneficiaries often encounter obstacles when applying. The primary barrier identified by students in relation to these opportunities is the insufficient information available to them (13%). Despite this, students have access to various information sources, including teaching staff, peers from other faculties, and the online environment (such as the university's website and its social media pages). However, for this interest to be fruitful, it must be matched by proactive engagement from the students.

On the other hand, universities should adapt their marketing strategies to align with students' profiles. New solutions could include creating a newsletter or leveraging platforms like TikTok to promote mobility programmes. Other useful tools may include student information seminars, testimonial campaigns from students who have participated in mobility programmes, mentoring sessions with teams managing these mobilities or career counseling centers, and regular updates of faculty notices with information on mobility scholarships. Such activities can increase students' awareness of international mobility opportunities and foster a more positive attitude toward participating in them.

An analysis of both the behavioral intentions of Ovidius University of Constanta students and the official statistics from the European Commission suggests that interest in international mobility will continue to grow in the coming years. For future mobilities, the majority of students would prefer to choose a European country (72%), although some are also interested in destinations in North America, Asia, and beyond.

In this context, universities should consider students' interests when updating their international mobility offerings. The increased interest in specific countries or regions should serve as the basis for determining how available funds are allocated. Another key factor is the students' needs during the mobility application process. Based on these needs, universities can offer personalized counseling services to help students select the most appropriate destination. When these conditions are met, the international experience will better align with students' expectations, leading to positive feedback.

To conduct a more effective analysis, universities should organize focus groups or surveys at least once a semester to better understand students' needs and create profiles of potential beneficiaries. As a result, some students may apply for international mobilities to develop technical skills, while others may seek opportunities to enhance their soft skills. Based on these findings, higher education institutions, particularly those responsible for managing international relations, should support the development of inter-institutional agreements with new universities that could attract students' interest in these scholarships.

Lastly, it is crucial to implement measures that ensure the effective development of international mobility programmes in higher education institutions. Given the increasing demand for international mobility, host universities will need to adapt their staff structures and infrastructures to provide a satisfactory experience for incoming students. Limited material, time, and financial resources - particularly within international relations departments - can make it difficult for higher education institutions to deliver high-quality educational and administrative services to incoming students (Bista, 2019). Additionally, bureaucracy and complex procedures further hinder the efficiency of the departments involved (Roman and Bulat, 2024). As a result, there is a risk of damaging the institution's reputation, even though internationalization has been a key factor in its strengthening. The same challenges apply to outgoing mobility.

To address these issues, international mobility departments could include a staff member dedicated to analyzing students' development needs. This role would help balance students' academic programmes with the demands of their future professional careers (Choudaha, 2017). Furthermore, streamlining administrative procedures and offering more tailored guidance can reduce barriers for students and ensure a smoother experience.

This research also has certain limitations, primarily due to the choice of target group. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of Romanian students' perceptions of international mobility programmes, a broader study including multiple universities across the country will be necessary. This would allow for more generalizable conclusions and a better understanding of the factors that influence students' decisions regarding international mobility.

In conclusion, international mobility opportunities are vital tools for implementing universities' international strategies. By executing these programmes efficiently, the benefits will be numerous: for students, in terms of their personal and professional development; for universities, in terms of increased visibility and prestige; and for the community, which will benefit from well-prepared individuals entering the labor market. To maximize these benefits, universities must continue to

evolve their approaches to mobility programmes, considering both students' preferences and the logistical challenges involved.

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