



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE  
ERASMUS STUDENT NETWORK

A word cloud where the words are arranged to form the shape of a graduation cap. The words are in various colors and sizes, including: recognition, exchange, ERASMUS, placement, study abroad, PRIME, Placement, European Union, Erasmus Student Network, Europe, ECTS, experience, prime, lifelong learning, learning agreement, education, languages, student, languages, obligations, placement, university, mundus, world, rights, and agreement.

# Successful Recognition Student Guidebook



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# Dear Student!

Taking part in the Erasmus exchange programme can be one of the greatest experiences in a student's academic career. If you have friends that are former Erasmus students, probably you have heard about how great a semester or two studying abroad can be. It is an academic exchange that offers great potential for added value to your curriculum. It complements the academic knowledge gained with opportunities for personal development and helps students to acquire skills needed for the job market. But not only! Erasmus also means discovering and exploring new cultures, meeting new people, learning new languages and travelling

Unfortunately, this opportunity for academic development is not always known or appreciated by students. It is partly because some of them don't have enough information about all the possibilities the Erasmus programme brings. The PRIME 2010 survey by ESN revealed that almost one fifth of Erasmus students never received information about their rights and obligations. Some students also get lost in the bureaucratic process and as a consequence do not obtain full academic recognition for their achievements abroad.

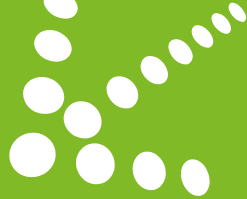
This is why we prepared this short guidebook for you! It is a brief, yet comprehensive compendium, showing you the recognition process step-by-step. It will explain to you your rights and obligations as an Erasmus student. Moreover, it will give you guidance on what and when you need to prepare to get full recognition of your studies abroad. This guide will help to ensure that you make the most of your Erasmus exchange!

Enjoy reading,

Erasmus Student Network

The international exchange  
is one of the  
**greatest experiences**  
in a student's academic career

# Erasmus in a nutshell



The Erasmus programme (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) was established in 1987. It is a flagship initiative of the European Commission, which enables students to study and work abroad in one of the 34 participating countries for a certain period of time (from 3 to 9 months). It forms an important part of the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). To participate in the Erasmus programme you need to be studying in a LLP participating country and to be enrolled in at least the second year of study in your home institution.

Apart student mobility, there are also mobility possibilities offered by the Erasmus programme for professors and university staff. In the framework of the programme, several activities promoting mobility are supported, such as the Erasmus Intensive Language Courses, where you can improve your language skills by participating in one of the courses offered at the host university.

By mid-2010, over 2.2 million students had participated in the Erasmus programme in one of more than 4 000 Higher Education Institutions in Europe. Annually, around 200 000 students pack their bags and move abroad to spend part of their studies in a foreign country.





# Your rights and obligations

Higher Education Institutions that want to participate in Erasmus activities must possess an Erasmus University Charter. The Charter aims to guarantee the quality of the programme by setting certain fundamental principles. Higher Education Institutions that are holders of the Erasmus University Charter can organise inter-institutional agreements, from which a student can benefit. Moreover, **by signing the Erasmus University Charter, HEI agrees to give full recognition to students who satisfactorily complete the activities specified in the compulsory Learning Agreement.**

The right to obtain full recognition is also written in the Erasmus Student Charter. The Charter is a document specifying the rights and obligations of an Erasmus student. It is a public document and should be made accessible to you by your university. If you cannot find a Charter on the website, ask your IRO or Erasmus coordinator to provide you with it.



## **“As an Erasmus student, you are entitled to expect:**

- Your home and host universities to have an inter-institutional agreement.
- The sending and receiving institutions to sign with you and before you leave a Learning/Training Agreement setting out the details of your planned activities abroad, including the credits to be achieved.
- Not to have to pay fees to your host university for tuition, registration, examinations, access to laboratory and library facilities during your Erasmus studies.
- Full academic recognition from your home university for satisfactorily completed activities during the Erasmus mobility period, in accordance with the Learning/Training Agreement.
- To be given a transcript of records at the end of your activities abroad, covering the studies/work carried out and signed by your host institution/enterprise. This will record your results with the credits and grades achieved. If the placement was not part of the normal curricula, the period will at least be recorded in the Diploma Supplement.
- To be treated and served by your host university in the same way as their home students.
- To have access to the Erasmus University Charter and Erasmus Policy Statement of your home and host universities.
- Your student grant or loan from your home country to be maintained while you are abroad.

## **As an Erasmus student, you are expected to:**

- Respect the rules and obligations of your Erasmus grant agreement with your home university or your National Agency.
- Ensure that any changes to the Learning/Training Agreement are agreed in writing with both the home and host institutions as soon as they occur.
- Spend the full study/placement period as agreed at the host university/enterprise, including undergoing the relevant examinations or other forms of assessment, and respect its rules and regulations.
- Write a report on your Erasmus study/placement period abroad when you return and provide feedback if requested by your home university, the European Commission or the National Agency.

## **If you have a problem:**

Identify the problem clearly and check your rights and obligations. Contact your departmental coordinator for Erasmus and use the formal appeals procedure of your home university if necessary.”

# Who is WHO?

*There are several people and institutions working on the Erasmus programme. You will cooperate with them during your application, preparations, stay abroad and formalities upon return, so it is important to know who is responsible for what.*

## **International Relations Office (IRO)**

Both your home and host institutions have an International Relations Office. They can have different names, e.g. International Bureau or Exchange Office. Their role is to provide information and counselling for incoming and outgoing students. The IRO staff take care of all official documentation and the enrolment process at both institutions. They are also a provider of information about the application procedure, requirements and the practical arrangements connected to your stay abroad.

## **Erasmus Coordinator**

Usually, each HEI has one institutional Erasmus coordinator and one faculty Erasmus coordinator per faculty. The list of the coordinators can be found on the university website. The coordinators are responsible for advising students on their choice of courses and number of ECTS credits. In case of any problems, you can consult the coordinator at either your home or host university.

## **National Agency (NA)**

Are the link between the European Commission and Higher Education Institutions. National Agencies are responsible for the promotion and implementation of the Erasmus programme on the national level and are therefore familiar with the relevant issues and organisational structures. They are present in 34 European countries. You can consult your National Agency if you need information about the Erasmus programme. Also, if your institution is failing to fulfil their obligations from the Erasmus University Charter you can report the problem to your National Agency.



# Your Erasmus... Step by Step!



*Going on Erasmus means that you will spend part of your studies abroad. It is not an additional semester or two, it is fully integrated into your pre-existing curriculum. To benefit fully from the Erasmus exchange and to obtain full recognition upon return, you need to prepare your stay in advance. Remember there are several steps of preparations that you need to complete.*



## Preparations before departure

You need to prepare your stay abroad well in advance. The most important steps for successful academic recognition need to be done before you leave.

### **When to go on exchange?**

This is the first decision you need to make. You can make it really early, even one or two years in advance! If you take a careful look at the programme of your studies you will notice that there are different courses: mandatory major courses; mandatory minor courses; free electives; thesis and so on. Each study programme has a certain number of mandatory courses you will need to complete to obtain your degree and a certain number of free electives to choose from.

Most probably you will have a mix of free electives and mandatory courses each semester. If you want to go on exchange, it is better to choose a semester or academic year when you will have less mandatory subjects and more free electives. You will be able to choose freely the courses that interest you most from the offer of the host institution. If you are not sure what time will be the best for you to depart on Erasmus, ask your Erasmus coordinator for advice.

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# APPLY!

## Check the deadline for applications in your home university and the eligibility criteria

Each Higher Education Institution has its own deadline for applications. You should start your preparations by checking all the deadlines. This is really important, because there are usually only one or two windows of opportunity to submit your application for the Erasmus programme each year.

## Choose the institution where you want to go on exchange

The decision about where you want to go on exchange is one of the most important aspects of the process. Make sure you choose wisely!

What do you need to remember when choosing the institution where you will be studying abroad?

- Check the list of the institutions that you can go to. You can do your Erasmus exchange in any **of the institutions that your university has a bilateral agreement with**. This information should be available on the website of the institution or your faculty. If you cannot find it, consult the International Relations Office or ask the Erasmus Coordinator of your university.
- Check the programme for the semester at your home institution – see what the mandatory subjects are and how many free electives you have.
- Check the study programme in the potential host institutions and see if they have matching courses for your mandatory subjects.

## Apply at your home institution

Each HEI has its own application procedure. Sometimes you will have to submit your CV and motivation letter, in other cases you will have to present yourself and your motivation to take part in the Erasmus programme in front of a special commission. In all the cases, make sure you are well prepared!

## Prepare the necessary documents

The Erasmus programme will allow you to transfer your learning outcomes from the host institution to your home institution, but to complete this process successfully you will need to prepare and submit several documents before, during and after your exchange.



# Learning Agreement

## Learning Agreement

Once your application to go on Erasmus is approved, all parties (student, host institution and sending institution) need to sign the Learning Agreement.

**The Learning Agreement is a negotiated agreement between you , your home and host institution.** It indicates (prior to the study period) what modules you will be studying during your exchange and how many ECTS are allocated to those components . It is an informal agreement, but according to the Erasmus Student Charter you have the right to be provided with it before you go abroad. The European Commission provides institutions with a template form of the Learning Agreement. Most of the institutions use this recommended form of the Learning Agreement, however it may occur in your institution that the LA will look different.

At the end of your exchange, the host institution will give you and your home university a Transcript of Records, a document showing which of the courses from the Learning Agreement you attended and successfully completed. **Recognition of all those modules as an integrated part of your curriculum is an obligation for your home institution.**

**Check the appendix to see what a Learning Agreement looks like!**

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**Plan your studies!**

**Experience something different!**

**Challenge yourself!**

**eXchange your Life!**

### **How to choose courses in your Learning Agreement?**

To complete the Learning Agreement, you need to make a choice of courses. It is very important that you choose the courses that suit you best, in order to benefit most from the exchange and to get them recognised when you come back. Start by looking at the programme at your home institution for the semester you want to go abroad. Which courses are the obligatory ones? How many ECTS do you have in free electives? Try to match your choices to the programme of your home institution. Do not decide on your own! After having reached the preliminary choice of courses, visit your Erasmus Coordinator and ask for advice.

**Pay attention to the schedule of the courses at the host university.** Usually Erasmus students are allowed to choose from a variety of courses from different years, specialisations and faculties. Therefore, it might happen that some of the courses you would like to take will overlap. To avoid this situation and future changes in the Learning Agreement, make sure you check the timetables before you make a final decision upon the courses.

## Check if you have enough ECTS in your Learning Agreement

### What are ECTS?

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) was developed by the European Commission to allow the transfer of learning experiences and outcomes between different institutions. Its aim is to facilitate student mobility and allow more flexible ways to gain degrees. ECTS credits are based on the workload students need in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes. Workload indicates the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations) required to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

Each course component (lectures, trainings, seminars etc.) has an allocated number of ECTS. 60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a full-time year of formal learning (academic year) and the associated learning outcomes. In most cases, student workload ranges from 1 500 to 1 800 hours for an academic year, whereby one credit corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of work.

Institutions which apply ECTS should publish their course catalogues online, including detailed descriptions of study programmes, units of learning, university regulations and student services.

Credits awarded in one programme may be transferred into another programme, offered by the same or another institution. Partner institutions should agree in advance on the recognition of periods of study abroad.

Ask your Erasmus coordinator about the minimum and maximum number of credits your Learning Agreement should contain. Usually, you will have to gain 30 ECTS to complete the semester.

### Check the transfer of credits

Most institutions use ECTS, which is the recommended credit transfer system. However, according to the PRIME 2010 study by ESN, in 37% of the universities, ECTS are used together with a national system of credit calculation. You need to check if your university is using ECTS only, or combines it with its own system. In the latter situation, your ECTS credits will be transferred and re-calculated. Ask the person responsible for the credit transfer for the conversion table. Try out this conversion table before completing the Learning Agreement to make sure that you will have enough credits after the conversion.



# Only a few more steps!

## Collect the necessary signatures for your Learning Agreement

After finalising your Learning Agreement, it needs to be accepted. **First you need to sign it, and then also your coordinators from your home and host institution need to approve it.** Firstly, give it to the coordinator in your home institution, and then send it to the host university. Remember the Learning **Agreement needs to be accepted and signed before your departure**, so you need to start this procedure as early as possible.

## Ask about the system of grade transfer at your institution

The grading systems vary greatly at different Higher Education Institutions in Europe. Most probably your home and host institution also use different grading scales. The differences in grading are natural; however it is really important that the transfer of grades is transparent, as sometimes grants or other benefits may depend on your level of performance during the exchange. A lot of students complain that their grade transfer was not done properly and the whole procedure was not transparent.

You can avoid this situation by asking your coordinator, who is responsible for the calculation of your grades upon return. Find out what is the grading system at your host university. Ask the responsible person how your grades will be converted before your departure. You should also be provided with the conversion table, which will allow you to check the transfer.

## Apply to the host institution

Once you are accepted as an outgoing student from your home university, you can start to prepare your application to the host university of your choice.

- Check the timeline and eligibility criteria at the university you want to studyh
- Prepare all the required documents

## Submit your application



## Steps to take upon arrival

### Visit to the International Relations Office and Erasmus coordinator

After your arrival to the host country, visit the International Relations Office and Erasmus coordinator. Make sure the university received all the documents you sent by post. Check if they signed and accepted your Learning Agreement. Visit the International Relations Office in the first week after your arrival. Take all of your documentation with you (ID, letter of acceptance, health insurance).

### Changes to the Learning Agreement

Sometimes, due to different reasons, some of the previously chosen courses will not be available or courses will overlap. In this situation you will have to change one or more courses from your Learning Agreement.

Once signed, the Learning Agreement can be changed during the study period. To make changes to the Learning Agreement, you need to use the second page of the document. You need to write all of the courses from the previous LA you wish to remove and all the new course units you decided to take add instead. Remember that the modifications need to be accepted and signed by all three parties: you your home university coordinator, and host university coordinator.





## Meeting your local ESN section!

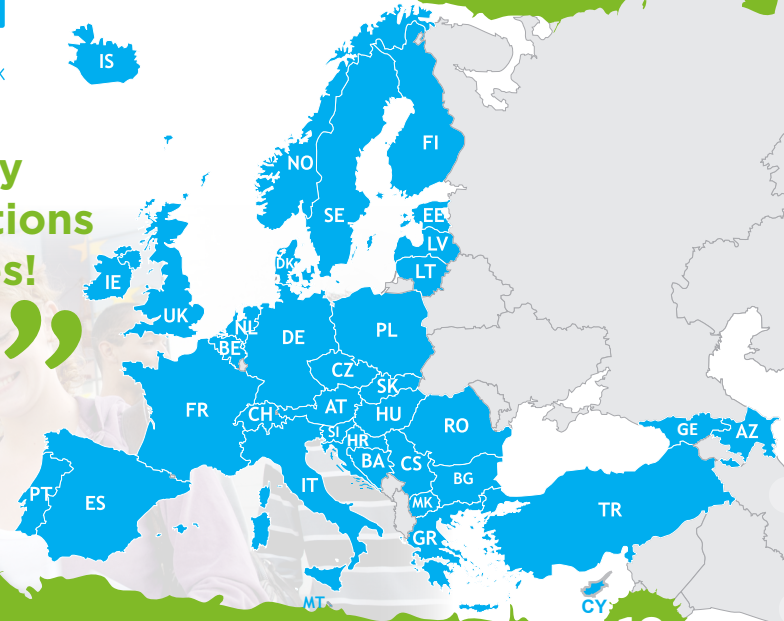
ESN (Erasmus Student Network) is a non-profit student organisation supporting student exchange in Europe. **ESN is present in approximately 400 Higher Education Institutions in 36 countries.** ESN offers help in the academic, social and practical integration process. This is mainly done through activities such as cultural and social events like trips to various places within the country, film nights, buddy group and language projects and international food festivals. In addition, many ESN sections have a mentor system, which helps the international students mainly in their academic and practical integration.

On [www.esn.org](http://www.esn.org) you can check the list of all ESN sections. If your host university has an ESN section, you should get in contact with them. You will meet enthusiastic local students who are always willing to help you in case of problems!

[www.esn.org](http://www.esn.org)



“  
Approximately  
400 ESN Sections  
in 36 countries!  
”



Find out if ESN  
is present in  
your town!

## Before going back

### Transcript of Records

Before going back to your home country, make sure that you received a Transcript of Records from your host institution.

The Transcript of Records is an important document both for the student and the institution. It is an official document, providing the proof of your study achievements, thus allowing recognition. It ensures that you have an accurate and up-to-date record of your study progress. It gathers the educational components you have taken abroad, the number of ECTS credits you have achieved and the grades you have been awarded.

The host institution will issue the Transcript of Records for each incoming student. They should send it to your home institution at the end of your period of study, in order to formally certify the work completed, the credits awarded, and the local grades received during the mobility period.

You should receive your Transcript of Records after completing your semester abroad and before leaving your host country. However, in some institutions the examination process is quite long and the Transcript of Records will not be ready before you leave. In such situations, make sure that you are in contact with the person responsible for producing it and delivering it to your institution. Make sure you know where to contact this person if necessary!



**Check the appendix  
and see how a  
Transcript of  
Records looks like!**



# OPPORTUNITIES

Mundus

Placement

Entrepreneurs

## **Erasmus Student Mobility for placements**

Erasmus Student Mobility for Placements enables students at Higher Education Institutions to spend a placement (traineeship/internship) period of between 3 months and 12 months in an enterprise or organisation in another participating country. It will enable you to develop specific skills including language skills, and to improve your understanding of the economic and social conditions of the country in which you are acquiring work experience.

### **To apply:**

You can only apply for the programme if you are a registered student at one of the HEIs with an Extended Erasmus University Charter. You will apply and be selected to go by your home institution but you need to independently find a company willing to host you.

## Erasmus Mundus

Erasmus Mundus offers joint degrees, so called “European” masters and PhD programs in a wide scope of fields. Since 2009, Erasmus Mundus has grown and offers full degree mobility, and also an opportunity to spend part of your studies in a different country anywhere in the world. It works similarly to Erasmus, but in contrast it is not limited to Europe and enables a truly international exchange between Europeans and non-Europeans, supported by scholarships.

### To apply:

To apply for an Erasmus Mundus scholarship you should address your application direct to an Erasmus Mundus course or partnership.

## Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is a project initiated by the European Union. It aims to help new entrepreneurs to acquire relevant skills for managing a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) by spending time with a business in another EU country. The exchange of experience takes place during a stay with the experienced entrepreneur, which helps the new entrepreneur acquire the skills needed to run a small firm. You can participate in the programme, if you are planning to start a new business or you have started one within the last 3 years. By participating in the programme, you will improve your knowledge and foster cross-border transfers of knowledge and experience. The programme operates in 24 EU countries.

### To apply:

You need to prepare your CV and motivation letter. You will submit your documents directly through the official programme website. With the help of local contact point, you will find an experienced entrepreneur who will host you.

### To know more:

[erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/index.php](http://erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/index.php)



**Still have questions?  
Find more information  
following this links**

**Erasmus Programme**

*bit.ly/erasmus\_programme*



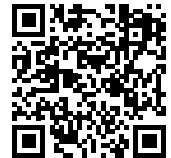
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**Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs**

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# Recognition: Do you want to know more?

Read the report  
“PRIME2010”  
Download it from [prime.esn.org](http://prime.esn.org)



A project of



**Erasmus Student Network (ESN)** is a non-profit international student organisation. Our mission is to represent international students, thus provide opportunities for cultural understanding and self-development under the principle of Students Helping Students.

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